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Studies in the Philosophy of Michel Foucault

STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MICHEL FOUCAULT

A French Alternative to Anglo-Americanism

Edited by
Brian Lightbody
and
Rohit Dalvi

With a Commendatory Preface by
Gabor Csepregi

The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston•Queenston•Lampeter

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Studies in the philosophy of Michel Foucault : a French alternative to Anglo-Americanism / edited by Brian Lightbody and Rohit Dalvi ; with a [commendatory] preface by Gabor Csepregi.
p. cm.
Proceedings of a conference held in Mar. 2008 at Brock University.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-1324-5
ISBN-10: 0-7734-1324-3
1. Foucault, Michel, 1926-1984--Congresses. 2. Philosophy--Congresses. I. Lightbody, Brian. II. Dalvi, Rohit, 1974-
B2430.F724S88 2010
194--dc22

2010022743

hors série.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

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The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092-0450

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
CANADA L0S 1L0

The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.
Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM SA48 8LT

Printed in the United States of America

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Commendatory Preface

Michel Foucault is doubtless one of most studied philosophers by the younger generation of scholars. Why do they turn with so much interest and curiosity to Foucault's books and lectures? Some are attracted to a thinker who devoted much of his energies to unmasking the most subtle modes of subjection in both the past and present ages. Others value his provocative insights and brilliant analyses on pivotal philosophical questions. The interests of Foucault were wide ranging. He wrote extensively on knowledge, history, subjectivity, science, language, body, ethics, education, and philosophy itself. Today the wealth of his ideas generates critical reactions and creative reflections. This book illustrates, for instance, how the central notions of self-transformation and exertion of power could be approached by fresh and stimulating considerations. In addition, the authors situate Foucault's practical philosophy in relation to views expressed by some eminent thinkers - Kant, Nietzsche, Dewey, or Bachelard. Thus they successfully highlight the originality and unity of Foucault's critical studies.

No thought starts from scratch. However innovative the theories on power relations and historical constitution of the human subjectivity are, Foucault still seems to remain the heir of a long tradition that descends from the Greeks. If, in the eyes of Foucault, a serious philosophical work should vigorously denounce various schemes of domination, it also has to articulate an ethics in which the care of the self and self-transformation are central concerns. To be sure, Foucault offers a radically new interpretation of the ancient ethics: the self is undergoing transformation through various daily practices in order to develop a political

resistance. Although he strongly emphasizes the significance of historical political contexts, as well as the web of social relations created within these contexts, his underlying understanding of philosophy, and of the role it plays, takes its roots in the Antiquity and is shaped by his original reading of the philosophers of the tradition. In this respect Foucault's thoughts transcend a particular age. Surely, this is the sign of a great philosopher.

The present collection of essays has the great merit of clarifying Foucault's ethical and political views in relation to some superficial and erroneous interpretations and shedding new light on the process of self-transformation. More importantly perhaps, the authors masterfully show what philosophy can achieve when it dares to challenge well entrenched views on contemporary ethical and social issues and, at the same time, seeks to remain reliant on its own historical roots.

Gabor Csepregi
Dominican University College

Editors' Preface

This collection of essays stems from a conference sponsored by the Foucault Circle of Canada and held at Brock University in March of 2008. The theme of the conference was simply "Foucault and Philosophy." Such a theme may seem trite, but our intention was to bring Foucault back into the philosophical fold. The Foucauldian secondary literature has been dominated by sociologists, psychologists, criminologists and, increasingly, geographers for decades. We expect this trend to continue and look forward to seeing what new insights from Foucault's rich corpus may be gleaned from these diverse fields. We wanted to reverse this trend, if only for a day. Our purpose was clear: we were to bring together these "many lines of flight", these many threads and myriad interests of Foucault and tie them to their common source: philosophy. In a sense our aim was to remind all of those working on Foucault that he was first and foremost a philosopher.

The work of most philosophers orbits around one, two or perhaps three central themes. Foucault is no different. The present study focuses on the three principal aspects of Foucault's work as Foucault himself acknowledged them to be namely, subjectivity, truth and power. We hope this volume will be of interest and assistance to the beginner and the expert alike, but above all we hope that we have preserved the integrity, profundity and fecundity of Foucault's thought.

Editors: Brian Lightbody and Rohit Dalvi.

Introduction

In the European philosophical tradition, Michel Foucault is unique in the attention his *oeuvre* pays to subjectivity. It would be fair to say that subjectivity is the central focus of Foucault's work. Foucault's attention to subjectivity does in no way entail a philosophy of the subject; in fact Foucault's thought militates against every vestige of Cartesianism in contemporary thought. Foucault affiliates himself with "a philosophy of knowledge, rationality, and concept" (a la Bachelard and Canguilhelm) while distancing himself from "a philosophy of experience, sense, and subject."[1] Foucault rejects any substantial notion of the subject and unlike the phenomenologists and Sartre in particular, does not proceed from an analysis of consciousness. The subject for Foucault has various historical constituted forms that arise either through the workings of systems of coercion and theoretical discourses working in conjunction with them or through "models" that are "proposed, suggested, imposed" on the individual through the devices of culture and society.[2]

Deciphering these modes of subjection is the central concern of the critical aspect of Foucauldian philosophy. In uncovering modes of subjection, we seek to establish a relation to ourselves, which would be the kind of relation to self and the self's actions which the Greeks identified as "the care of the self". It is a process not only of learning how we are constituted and constitute ourselves as subjects but of refusing ourselves, that is to say, refusing what we are, of not taking ourselves at face-value. Rather than passively accepting the various forms of subjectivity, Foucault, in the spirit of Kant, advocates a critical engagement

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[1] Foucault, M. in Georges Canguilhem's, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone, 1991), 20-21.
[2] Foucault, M. "The Ethic Of The Care Of The Self as a Practice Of Freedom" In J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (eds.), *The Final Foucault*. (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press), 11.

with the "present". This engagement cultivates an ethos of understanding "the limits that are imposed on us" and experimenting "with the possibility of going beyond them."[3]

The role of philosophy in cultivating this ethos is paramount. For Foucault philosophy is critical in that it questions every schema of domination. This questioning is the process through which self-transformation in the sense of going beyond the imposed limits of various forms of subjectivity can occur. Self-transformation aims at a relationship to the self, which is not determined by the historical constitution of subjectivity. It has the capacity to limit and disrupt the workings of power relations and has an ethical priority. It is only through transforming our relation to ourselves that we can be prepared to have an ethical relation to others. Self-transformation allows us to navigate a route through the treacherous waters of "relations of power", "games of truth" and practices of power-knowledge.

This collection of essays addresses questions that arise at this ethical intersection in Foucault's thought. The authors try to tease apart the strands of thought that define Foucault's thought from his methodological work on archaeology and genealogy to explicating their relationship to the self-transformation which became, as it were, the ethical center of Foucault's thought. The later Foucault's concern with the Greeks as well his shift from the analysis of power-knowledge to the intricate relations between subjects and truth-games are analyzed. Given the kinds of themes this book addresses it could also have been titled "Foucault's *Askesis*" or "Foucault's *Ethos*", however, considering Foucault's critical-practical notion of philosophy, *Foucault and Philosophy* adequately captures the practices and the mode of being they aspire to.

In her essay, "Public and Private within the Panoptic Modality of Facebook," Sarah Hamilton examines the Facebook phenomenon and the forms

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[3] Foucault, M. "What is Enlightenment" in *The Foucault Reader* (New York : Vintage, 1986), 50.

of subjectivity it engenders as well the various intersections of the notions of public and private that inform Facebook as a mode of socialisation.

Scott Nicholson traces the parallels between Foucault and Dewey and comments on the important differences in their views on education. Samuel Talcott's essay seeks to highlight the influence of Georges Canguilhelm on Foucault's work. He demonstrates how both thinkers sought, through their "historical epistemology" to show how rationalities are produced. Scott Balasak's essay defends the claim that there is a methodological unity to Foucault's work, which deploys archaeology and genealogy to investigate and understand the three foci of power, knowledge and the body. Saladin Ahmed's paper highlights the centrality of genealogy to Foucault's thought.

Rohit Dalvi and Annie Larivee in their respective essays turn to the question of the presence of ancient philosophy in Foucault's thought. Annie Larivee sees Foucault as an "interlocutor" in her development of a contemporary ethics of the care of the self. To this end she examines whether Foucault's "use" of the ancients is a "reappropriation" or a "critical" one. This essay also closely examines Foucault's use of the Greek notion of the "care of the self". Rohit Dalvi considers Foucault's notion of "practices of freedom" and the centrality of the "relation to oneself" to develop an outline of a Foucauldian ethics which can be developed only through the cultivation of an ethos. This paper argues for placing Foucault in an ethical framework that is primarily concerned with human flourishing. Brian Lightbody in his paper "Foucault and Self-Transformation," examines some of the conceptual difficulties with regard to Foucault's notion of self-transformation (deprendre de soi meme) as articulated by Christopher Norris. He argues that self-transformation is liable to lead to ontological and ethical incoherencies if we forget that the very notions of "transformation" and "self" only make sense provided that they are undergirded by an historical context.

Subjectivity

Chapter 1

Public and Private within the Panoptic Modality of Facebook

(Sarah Hamilton, Trent University)

Why "Facebook"? Why "face," and why "book"? A *book* is a repository for knowledge, a graduated process, or a set of multiples. As text, it implies networked multiplicities and interfacing caches of meaning. *To book* is to reserve, to engage, or to create an official log of someone's name and personal details, as a criminal. A *face* is the main determinant of recognition on a body, the site of both inbound and outgoing perception, what reads and is read in judgements or determinations of affect. It is the expressant of emotion; a manifestation or appearance; a surface given to be seen, or one determined to a particular function. *To face* is to turn toward, to encounter, to overcome, or to cover over. An amalgamation of these terms suggests a determined encounter leading to the recognition and recording of surface identities, the intersecting of multiple units of meaning in a progression toward unilateral intelligibility, an engagement with available functions or forces leading to transparency, insight, or knowledge, and an instrumental (or disciplinary) skein of assessments, regulations, revealings, and obscurings that operate within the field of emotion or affect.

Facebook is a self-described "social utility that connects people with friends and others,"[39] a networking website that reportedly takes its name from the booklets of student information distributed by American universities at the beginning of each academic year to facilitate social interactions.[40] As of March

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[39] Facebook, "Privacy Overview," 2007, 31 May 2007 <http://trentu.facebook.com/about.php>. Hereafter referred to as "Facebook, 'Overview.'"

[40] Wikipedia, "Facebook," 31 May 2007, 31 May 2007, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>. Hereafter cited as "Wikipedia, 'Facebook.'" All statistics and facts in this section are from the same site.

2007, Facebook was the most viewed site amongst American youth, with 18 million users and 30 billion page views per month, and its largest network was the city of Toronto, Ontario, with over 600,000 members. Facebook began in 2004 as "The Facebook," a project of Mark Zuckerberg, then a student at Harvard University. By the end of 2004, it had expanded from Harvard throughout "Ivy League" schools, had over a million users, had entered into its first lawsuit, and had received financial backing from PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel. It continued to expand throughout 2005 and 2006, receiving $12.7 million U.S. in venture capital from Accel Partners and extending its user base from university to high school students. On September 11, 2006, Facebook "went public," making its services available to all users of the internet.

As a representationalist forum listing individual profiles, like other social networking websites, Facebook possesses an "enframing" function: its encapsulation of personal information encodes aspects of the human into data, putting one's "face" forward for perusal by one's peers. Its "capture" of identity is analogous to that of a portrait, preserving an affective trace of the individual that may be engaged *in absentia*, in the absence of corporeal or even temporal propinquity. Whether any enframing can be regarded as purely representational is a matter of debate. I am inclined to presume, with Judith Butler, that the frame is "always already guilty"; that it is ineluctably invested in the enframing of that which it gives-to-be-seen.[41] This raises questions about representation, and about whether the subject of Facebook pre-exists its enframing within that modality; or whether Facebook, as an active enframing, generates a subjectivity that is site-specific and local to its interactive environment. A further question arises: what is the relationship between a Facebook-specific subjectivity and other lived subjectivities such as those of citizenry, race, class, bodily ability, sexuality, gender, and the ever-proliferating "etc..."? Within the scope of this paper, I will

[41] Judith Butler, "Abu Ghraib and the Territory of Photography," Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Hilton Hotel, San Francisco, 18 April 2007. Hereafter referred to as "Butler, Territory." I will expand on my understanding of this lecture in the section about affect below.

concern myself primarily with the first of these, citizenry (pretending for now that it is as autonomously bounded as the sovereign subject, rather than a permeable conceptual membrane that ought to be thought together with the rest). To enframe the relationship between Facebook, conceived as *an affective modality that produces a panopticist form of subjectivity*, and statecraft, I will first discuss definitions of the "public" and "private" realms within Immanuel Kant's essay "What Is Enlightenment?"[42] and in Michel Foucault's response of the same title.[43]

As an ostensibly representationalist modality, then, Facebook seems to participate in the internet's most optimistic promises of pluralism, the free proliferation of information, and democratic autonomy. Purposively designed, Facebook gives material form to reason, much as nature does within Rationalism; it is an imaginary of its creator, materially reified.[44] While cases of legal intervention involving state authorities point to a zone of indistinction between "public" and "private" on Facebook,[45] common practice by users includes the circulation of reminders that "nothing is private on the internet." This highlights the publicity of Facebook while also hinting at a hermetic quality: like other internet forums, and in spite of privacy warnings, Facebook mechanically and systemically appears to users as a private space. Contemporary, post-Freudian perspectives tend to regard the private as a space of free thought and free action, a space of autonomy where (legal) activities are permissible that wouldn't be "appropriate" in public. "Being in public" with unknown others, in contrast,

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[42] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1969, 85-92. Hereafter cited as "Kant."

[43] Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon, 1984, 36. Hereafter cited as "Foucault."

[44] In what sense social spaces on the internet are "real" is debated in discussions of, for example, Second Life. I will only note here that the electronic signals comprising the internet are no less material and subject to material forces than those conducted through the central nervous system of the human body; and that the internet is not exempt from the legal conventions of quotidian life, although in some cases it seems to occupy an extra-territorial liminal zone between the juridical systems of different nation-states.

[45] One such intervention occurred in March 2005, when a University of Oklahoma student received a visit from the United States Secret Service after reportedly posting a joke on Facebook about assassinating President George W. Bush. Source: Wikipedia, "Facebook," 31 May 2007, 31 May 2007, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>.

mandates the restriction of "natural" inclinations and the adoption of "civility" or self-censorship. This ascription of qualities to the public and private realms is historically contingent, and is not, as Foucault argues, exactly the inverse of Kant's division between the public and private uses of reason. Rather, it overlaps with Kant's account in some respects, and diverges from it in others.

Kant's descriptions of the public and private within the "Enlightenment" paper (to which I am confining my analysis) are inextricably bound to the Rationalist project of cumulatively moving humanity toward enlightenment. His terms are embedded in contiguous discourses of religion and monarchy, even as Foucault extrapolates from these *to the relation between the secular, democratized individual and her social or state context, or to the relation between the individual and herself.* Foucault summarizes Kant as follows: "reason must be free in its public use, and must be submissive in its private use" (Foucault, 36). What is inaccurate here is Foucault's implicit assumption of *scale* – he takes the apposite threshold of distinction to be the limits of the atomic self, conceived either as material substance or as a metaphysical subject. On this view, what is interior, the private, marks a zone of autonomous thinking or being (which Foucault describes in irrelational terms, while I am describing it as the relation between the individual and herself); while what is exterior, the public, is the realm where naturalized individual freedoms must be checked in accordance with heteronomous constraints. It makes sense to think of this as a reversal of the traditional interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy, in which "autonomous" action is that which heeds moral duty and prevails over the capitulation to heteronomous (or enslaving) desires. Yet Kant's own presumption of a scalar difference in constraints can only be understood together with a corresponding scalar distinction in moral duties. The apposite threshold of distinction between public and private extends beyond the individual to a frontier where her immediate social context is distinguished from a social context much greater in scale, that of humanity-at-large. For Kant, both "public" and "private" are subject

to social constraints, but differently, while contemporary "autonomy" is nonsensical.

Kant defines the private realm as one of *interest*: "Private use [of reason] I call that which [the individual] may make of it in a particular civil post or office which is entrusted to him," within which "[m]any affairs... are conducted in the interest of the community [that] require a certain mechanism through which some members of the community must passively conduct themselves with an artificial unanimity" (Kant, 87). He cites for example public officers or clergymen, who are duty-bound to fulfil private roles within their organizations. The continued ensuring of public good requires that in situations of private interest, "argument is certainly not allowed – one must obey" (Kant, 87).

In contrast, Kant defines "the public use of one's reason" as "the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the reading public" (Kant, 87), independent of any organization, interest, or affiliation, save the interests of humanity-at-large.[46] When "a part of the mechanism" comes to maturity and recognizes himself as "a member of the whole community or of a society of world citizens" (both Kant, 87), then he "has complete freedom, even the calling" (Kant, 88) to publicly exercise his critical faculties to identify injustice or advocate reforms within a system that he might otherwise be obliged to sanction or submit to. Put simply, if it is law he must obey; and if it is an unjust law, then to the extent that he regards himself as a part of the greater "mechanism" of humanity, he experiences a "calling" to publicly critique it – while nevertheless submitting to it as long as it remains law. He is required not to be consistent, but to tailor his obeisance or critique to specific contexts. In private, he is responsible to a particular local duty with which he has been "entrusted," while in public, he remains under a second-level "local" or "private" duty to the monarch, insofar as he is a citizen of the state. Yet his membership within "humanity at large" creates

[46] Foucault points to the limited scope of what constitutes humanity-at-large for Kant, suggesting that Kant universalizes what are necessarily particular conditions; i.e. that Kant's notion of "mankind" encompasses too much, necessitating a metaphysical and hegemonic understanding of "humanity's final goal."

what Kant stops short of calling a "duty" to exercise his capacity for critique, in the name of humanity's enlightenment. At each level of the scale, context determines the individual's constraints (or freedoms) and his corresponding duties.[47] The advancement of human knowledge that results from the autonomous, public use of reason aids in the progression toward enlightenment, and both the Church and Frederick of Prussia himself are obliged to allow this public use in support of human progress. The importance of this is shown by how closely Kant ties the use of reason to human nature.[48]

Without employing these terms, Foucault distinguishes between *instrumental* rationality and *substantive* rationality, suggesting that for Kant the private use of reason is instrumental (the means to a specific end); while the public use of reason "has no other end but itself: *räsonieren* is to reason for reasoning's sake" (Foucault, 36). In this, Foucault underestimates Kant's investment in monarchy and theism. Against Foucault's interpretation, Kant's descriptions of "reason for reason's sake" dovetail with the Rationalist tradition, viewing pure reason as synonymous with "nature" and "God" (retaining vestiges of the Medieval tradition that reads the monarch as appointed by God). The ultimate end of human progress, then, is to move toward "completed" enlightenment – toward complete knowledge and absolute reason, in a graduated Christian teleology according to which humanity's essence is the purposive progress toward God and deific virtue. All progress is a means to this final end, toward "en-lighten-ment" in its fullest theological sense. Reason for reason's sake is reason for God's sake, and it is only from a secular perspective (in which the desired end is absurd), or from a Spinozistic God's-eye-view (in which God is

[47] If we read backwards from a Foucauldian concept of autonomy, the consequence seems to be that an individual is "absolutely free" only where she is totally devoid of context, and is otherwise "free to –." Kantian freedom is a predicate, rather than a noun (as for Foucault); a relational modality instead of a detached absolute. This has ramifications for contemporary notions of "affect" and "care."

[48] There are Aristotelian and Spinozist echoes here: if enlightenment is the end of the human, and human nature is the striving toward that end ("*conatus*" for Spinoza), then human nature is progress, and progress is a virtue; much as being sharp is a virtue for a knife, whose end is to cut. See Kant, 89.

immanent), that this form of reason ceases to be "instrumental." To the extent that Kant uses "reason" in the sense of an "end in itself," he is operating with two simultaneous scalar perspectives, mobilized by theology; whereas Foucault, in contrast, empties both levels out onto the secular plain.

Indeed, this scalar parallelism is at the core of Kant's political "contract" with Frederick of Prussia, as Foucault refers to it. Kant argues that neither a ruler nor the Church would be justified in sedimenting a regulative framework of interpretation ("in obligating itself... to a certain unchangeable symbol") for reasons of security (or "unceasing guardianship... over the people as a whole" – both Kant, 89), because to do so for "even... the lifetime of one man" (Kant, 90) would generate a waste-time in the progress toward enlightenment. "Such a contract, made to shut off all further enlightenment from the human race," is "a crime against human nature" (which, recall, is a crime against progress) and "is absolutely null and void even if confirmed by the supreme power, by parliaments, and by the most ceremonious of peace treaties" (all Kant, 89; I understand "supreme power" to refer to the monarch). By identifying the rule of Frederick of Prussia (whom Kant would have allow the unfettered public use of reason) as the ideal condition not only of monarchy but also of Enlightenment, Kant is able, five years before the French Revolution of 1789, to argue against a republic and against revolution ("new prejudices will serve as well as old ones to harness the great unthinking masses" – Kant, 86), instead privileging obeisance to the monarchy as the height of moral duty and human freedom: "only one who is himself enlightened, is not afraid of shadows, and has a numerous and well-disciplined army to assure public peace" can permit the public use of reason without sacrificing private obeisance (Kant, 92). The securing of obeisance by a monarch, then, is necessary for human progress toward enlightenment; Kant is not (within this essay) as concerned about individual autonomy as Foucault suggests. Instead of an end-in-itself, autonomy is a means toward enlightenment, and is

always already subsumed under a third-level scalar constraint of obeisance to monarchy.

Foucault wants to identify the Kantian "exit" from immaturity and entrance into critique as a modernist passage that privileges autonomy and entails an "attitude" of enlightenment, but for Kant this transition is firmly rooted in a metaphysical system from which it cannot easily be extracted. Critique does, at root, "entail faith in Enlightenment" (Foucault, 50); but the progressive movement toward reason (the exercise of Kantian "autonomy"), and the epistemological project that it entails (conceived as "a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating" – Foucault, 50), are for Kant unremittingly theological and monarchical. For exactly the historicist reasons that Foucault defines in his essay,[49] it is not clear that autonomy and critique can be divested from their theologico-monarchical frame; nor that they can be lightly transported to new frames and mobilized within a secular project, decontextualized in what seems like a strange critical analogue of what the U.S. government calls "extraordinary rendition."[50] If we are to remain faithful to the "attitude" and "ethos" of the Enlightenment, as Foucault recommends, we will rather ask how theology and a monarchism rooted in theology continue to inform our "secular" present, shaping its lived structures and the critiques we make of them.

I began by suggesting that Facebook is a purposive system comparable to nature within Rationalism, and that it is a public space. The limitations of these claims should now be clear. While Facebook is a deliberate architecture similar to nature for a Rationalist theist, it is not fractal in the same way; there is no necessary scalar alignment of the rationality of its author and the rationality of

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[49] "...criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying" (Foucault, 45-6). I am suggesting that Kant's essay and its multiple readings are just such a fishtailing "event."

[50] "Extraordinary rendition" is the U.S. government's practice of containing security suspects within a space of juridical indistinction by transporting them between geographical territories. Decontextualized from state discourses of human rights, suspects may be processed and tried extra-legally.

Facebook as an unfolding system. Facebook's purposiveness is not an inbuilt teleology working its subjects toward an enlightened identification with its creator. Yet as a mechanistic structure inviting a specific type of subject-formation, Facebook may share more with Rationalism than instrumentality. It may invite a form of "en-lighten-ment" – conceived as a revealing, or as a *slanted panopticist exposure*. If so, Facebook is fractal in the sense of embodying a microcosm of the ethos of the Enlightenment: a progression toward revelation, fixed meanings, contextualized autonomy, and regulative control. What impressions are recorded with each click, into what silver? How does the "booking of face" operate?

Here, we return to the question of whether Facebook is a public space. I have argued against the popular view of Kant as a champion of Enlightenment autonomy, and stated that for Kant (at least within "What Is Enlightenment?"), the difference between a "free" public space and a constrained private space is scalar; that the autonomy and duties of each realm are tied to, and enframed by, context. In other words, the autonomy that constitutes "maturity" for Kant is a relational autonomy.[51] Although Foucault's extractions from Kant (if popular) seem decontextualized and somewhat ahistorical,[52] what he highlights about "the Enlightenment" nevertheless remains crucially important for contemporary analyses of subject-formation and governmentality. They needn't be rooted in an "absolute Kant" or a "right understanding of Kant" to be vital for contemporary projects. Drawing attention to his misreading of Kant, to the extent that he makes one, only opens up a different reading that can be set into play with the elements of Kant that he has pointed to; this may prove "enlightening" when read together with Foucault's own work. How, then, would a reading of Facebook through a

[51] My understanding of Kant is informed by four years of living in Heisei Japan, where to come to maturity is not to assertively exercise one's autonomy – this is immaturity – but to come into awareness of one's social context (in specific moments) and to act autonomously in accordance with its constraints, without needing to be prompted.

[52] "Ahistorical" is a problematic term when discussing Foucault, for whom historical work can only ever be "historiography"; the word evokes a transcendent sense of history.

Kantian understanding of public and private, and of relational autonomy, help to contextualize the internet modality within an inheritance of Enlightenment values? I will now discuss what "privacy" means in the context of Facebook, and look into how its panoptic qualities operate through affect.

If Facebook "encodes aspects of the human into data," as I said above, and does so through a mechanism of "capture" that transports an affective trace of individual identity into a "representationalist" frame, then questions arise about what constitutes "the human" and what its relationship is to affect. At the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in San Francisco, Judith Butler defined "the human" as what is foregrounded by the frame – within, for example, a photograph of torture at Abu Ghraib. The human is "a value and a morphology" that is or isn't produced, but is certainly invoked, in such media. "The inhuman" is implicit within the field of the human, and so this field involves a "redoubling" that exposes and establishes a norm (of "humanness"). As a norm or a value, "the human" is closely related to affect; indeed, if I've understood Butler correctly, affect may be the bronchiolate reticulum that routes, captures, or structures the human, like air giving shape to a lung. At the A.A.G., "affect" was variously defined as:

1) "kinds of interpretation," related to but different from "political views"; affect is the middle passage between an image and the response it galvanizes; or is that which results (or fails to result) in "ethical responsiveness" upon viewing such an image (Butler, "Territory"); and
2) "a set of somatic markers through which statehood operates,"[53] that is, a set of bodily responses to, or corporeal productions of, the regulative framework(s) of the state.

The term "affect" may have its origins in Baruch de Spinoza's *The Ethics*,[54] where "emotions" and "*affectiones*" are synonymous. The essence of the human

[53] Jennifer Hyndman, panel discussant on "Statecraft," Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Hilton Hotel, San Francisco, 20 April 2007.
[54] Baruch de Spinoza, "The Ethics," *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951, 43-271.

for Spinoza is its *conatus*, its "striving" or "endeavour," a productive, driving desire to perpetuate the self; this is the main affect, while all other *affectiones* also represent an increase or a decrease in the body's power of activity. "Affect" thus intertwines emotional responses, the impetus to move or act, and self-preservation. Action and movement can occur actively (through reason) or passively (through passions),[55] but because body and mind are not discrete for Spinoza (mind is "the idea of the body," i.e. the ideational force within the body), both circumstances marry action with emotive response.

Integrating these ideas, affect can be defined as a teleological matrix determining (or "enclosing") the human, mobilizing human activity through emotion/desire, and manifesting as somatic markers. Affect produces and is produced by statehood and the media through which statehood galvanizes and perpetuates itself. It articulates the striving of the individual and the *conatus* of statecraft, illuminating the normativity that necessarily underlies both. Consequently, Facebook may be thought of as an active enframing that operates through affect and the invoking of somatic echoes, to create a human subject always already invested in the value-mechanisms of statehood – producing, exposing, establishing, or reiterating norms of "the human" within a field of judgement. As a productive modality of subject-formation, Facebook is not discrete from the "face-to-face" "affect-ions" of quotidian life; and so a note about performativity is required.

Addressing the question of whether performativity is systemic or agency-driven, Butler clarifies in the Introduction to *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* that performativity is "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names."[56] Discourse

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[55] The Latin root of both "passion" and "passive" is "*pati*," suggesting the Rationalist premise that to be acted upon by an external agency is to "feel passion" and is to suffer; while to determine one's own actions and mobilities through a measured, moderate exercise of reason is to enjoy freedom from bondage. The Marquis de Sade, a century later, would disagree.

[56] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive "Limits" of Sex*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, 2. Hereafter referred to as "Butler, *Bodies*."

presents as the ontological classification of prediscursive givens, lending them nomenclature and adding them to "a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating," as Foucault puts it; yet this lending of nomenclature is exactly what *creates* the objects of classification (*qua* objects of classification) – in other words, discourse is productive. And its productions require constant reiteration. Indeed, without a repeated citation of the sexed subject into discourse, the "ontological given" of sex *slides* (its given-ness proves illusory). Yet its citation into discourse means that sex *elides* – to the extent that sex is fixed in place, it determines – or forms – the sexed subject within a normative field, masking reiteration in a process of naturalization,[57] and establishing a schema for affective judgments.

Because Butler's performativity refers to the compulsory and regulative matrix that produces (or fails to produce) the subject, it may seem disjunctive to frame a discussion of the voluntary modality of Facebook in such weighty terms. As its Privacy Policy and Terms of Service are fond of pointing out, Facebook is an optional playroom into which subjects who seem to preexist it voluntarily inscribe themselves. I will argue that more is at stake here than is initially apparent. Indeed, concealment seems to be embedded into Facebook's interactive frames: clicking on the "Privacy" link at the top of any page will not take one to Facebook's Privacy Policy (together with its Terms, the definitive statement on autonomy within Facebook). Instead, one arrives at a page called "Privacy Overview," which includes the slippery statement that "Facebook wants you to share your information with exactly the people you want to see it" (Facebook, "Overview"), and offers myriad controls for adjusting settings. (One wonders if "exactly" implies "only.") In a strange equivocation, the apposite button to get to the actual Privacy Policy is exactly (and only) identical to this one, marked by the same word and equally as small, but appearing at the bottom of one's profile,

[57] A process of "becoming naturalized" is paradoxical. A Derridean would argue that a trace of reiteration always remains, poised to deconstruct even as discourse constructs: this paradox of "becoming naturalized," along with any disjunctive elements that do not fit into the classified framework, constitutes just such a Derridean trace.

more difficult to locate. Its more obvious twin at the top of the page is easily mistaken for Facebook's Privacy statement. Accentuating this elusiveness, no title within the actual Privacy Policy suggests that one has finally reached the Holy Grail; instead, the page opens with a friendly preliminary section entitled "Facebook Principles," which states, "we give you control of" and "[y]ou should have control over" your personal information.[58] Clicking on the "Terms" button next to the lower "Privacy" button compounds this message of autonomy: "If you do not agree to abide by these or any future Terms of Use, do not use or access (or continue to use or access) the Service or the Site."[59] Disengagement from the site, although not an act of communication in any sense, seems to represent sovereign disagreement with Facebook's Terms of Use. Disagreement is presented as an autonomous state, instead of a relation; users may inscribe themselves into a preformed mechanism of disagreement, and failure to do so constitutes consent. Continuing to use the site represents the "autonomous" decision to accept its terms – mechanistically, without negotiation or communication. Here, Facebook usage parallels citizenship for Kant. It is a realm requiring *a priori* obeisance, producing the "user" through its regulatory framework and always already implicating her within it. And if the Terms of Use are vague about what counts as "usage" or "access" here, they are less so elsewhere:

> By *accessing or using* our web site at www.facebook.com or the mobile version thereof (together the "Site") or by posting a Share Button on your site, you (the "User") signify that you have read, understand and agree to be bound by these Terms of Use ("Terms of Use" or "Agreement"), *whether or not you are a registered member of Facebook*. (Emphasis mine.) (Facebook, "Terms.")

"Usage" and "access" require nothing more than a visit to the site; a "visitor" is automatically interpellated into the legalistic nexus of Facebook's Terms of Use.

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[58] Facebook, "Privacy Policy," 13 December 2006, 25 April 2007 <http://trentu.facebook.com/policy.php>. Hereafter referred to as "Facebook, 'Privacy.'"

[59] Facebook, "Terms of Use," 13 December 2006, 25 April 2007 <http://trentu.facebook.com/terms.php>. Hereafter referred to as "Facebook, 'Terms.'"

The daunting final clause of this quotation suggests that anyone inquiring into Facebook's Privacy Policy or Terms of Use by accessing the website, say for the purposes of academic study, has agreed to these terms *prior to reading them.* While logical and chronological antecedence shouldn't be confused, the chronological antecedence of being written about *before becoming the written-about* evokes the logical antecedence of subject-formation described by performativity. The Terms of Use are problematic because they assume the existence of a prediscursive "self" that comes to Facebook as if from an ontological elsewhere. Yet at the moment of the subject's entry into the modality of Facebook, she is preformed within the Terms, produced and regulated simultaneously. This prefiguration parallels the formation of the gendered subject through the juridico-normative matrix of sex, as described by Butler, but is complicated by the possibility that a pre-existing subject does indeed come to Facebook from elsewhere, namely from the "real world" beyond the internet. I have argued that subjectivity within Facebook is produced concomitantly with visiting the website for the first time; but to the extent that "a subject" does this visiting, she cannot be thought of as a "pure" subject ready for inscription within Facebook. Rather, she is already preformed through discursive constructs such as sex and citizenry, interpellated into new discourses like Facebook through a process that is not discrete from but performatively reiterative of these prior discursive formations. Sex is not a set of somatic markers within a Facebook profile, but *an affective echo of the somatic* within a single term of text. This term ("male" or "female") is invested with symbolic meaning, and renders the subject of Facebook intelligible within a nexus of similar terms ("single," "resident of Vancouver," etc.). Any discernible point of origin into the modality of Facebook is already a citational reiteration within a larger interstice of citations. The "self" that comes to Facebook is not prediscursive; it must be analyzed without carving ontological cuts between Facebook and the "real world."

The discursive reiterations of Facebook may seem unimportant insofar as Facebook constitutes an optional leisure activity. The compulsoriness of sex within heteronormative discursive formations, in contrast, confers remarkable penalties on deviation. Yet as I have argued, the virtuality of Facebook is not isolated from material consequences (see also note #7 above; or the relation between preteen Facebook bullying and suicide). Indeed, its regulatory formation of subjectivity might approach the "problematrix" of sex when read through the reverberating effects of 9/11 in the U.S. and Canada, or through the relation between these effects and affect-generating media. Before discussing this at more length, I will quickly point to other reasons why the discreteness of quotidian life and techno-life cannot be presumed (leaving aside for now the material-rendered-machine and cyborg subjectivities). While Facebook markets itself as recreational, one's IP address can be tracked; and the average Facebook profile contains information that is not innocuous. Users are invited to post contact data, favourite "books, movies, interests," dating preferences, attendance at events, and present activities or current location. The latter "status" statement takes the form of a generic copula: "Jill Smith is... [at home waiting to be stalked by you], [out on the town in Jerusalem with a bomb strapped to her chest], [under house arrest on a security certificate]," etc etc.[60] Like many features on Facebook, this "status" statement is optional, a "convenience feature" that can be ignored at will. Nevertheless, it enters the social vernacular of Facebook in a similar way as the "optional" usage of cell phones, enabling a connectivity with acquaintances that borders on socially mandatory, coming at the expense of privacy.

A non-optional feature of the Facebook Profile is the "Newsfeed," which streams a broadcast to one's "friends" about modifications to one's profile, friends added, changes in relationship status, the joining or leaving of "groups," photos or applications added, and a portion of the text of any "Wall Post," "Note,"

[60] Dec. 26th, 2007: This function was recently changed to allow the usage of other verbs in status statements. The Newsfeed discussed below has also been modified since early 2007, such that users now have substantial control over what information is broadcast.

or comment one makes. If a user is "tagged" in a photo, this will also appear in the Newsfeed. Although she may adjust how much she sees of the activities of others, the user (as of May 2007) cannot control what information about herself is broadcast. Every action except for exchanges of private messages is viewable by others. One may, however, disable certain "friends" from seeing portions of one's Profile; this seems to constitute the "control" promised by Facebook's Privacy Policy. Yet even this "choice" comes at the expense of full participation in the social modality of Facebook, constructing a normative framework with social consequences for exempting oneself. Although not severe, these consequences conflict with the desire to connect with one's peers, inviting self-censorship: the user leaves the Newsfeed enabled, but modifies her activities in view of an ever-watching public. The "society" of Facebook produces a self-regulating, panoptic subject in Jeremy Bentham's sense,[61] an instrumentalized subject who modifies her behaviour with the consciousness of being surveilled – whether or not she is actually, presently, being surveilled. This occurs alongside a greater systemic melding of capitalism, surveillance, and anxiety, even as San Francisco billboards state, "You are on private-circuit television twenty times a day – are you dressed for it?" As an "optional" site of self-inscribed surveillance, Facebook invites the paranoiac question: *what are we being groomed for?* An affective modality, operating on emotion if not on somatic response, Facebook enframes the human as an *always already surveilled subjectivity* – a *voluntarily* surveilled subjectivity. The subject submits herself to surveillance at the moment of inscription as a subject, and in spite of its mechanicity, this process is erroneously packaged as one of autonomous choice. Because Facebook may highlight trends in other media of statecraft, it is important to ask questions about how and why this "self-inscription" occurs.

Although Facebook seems to be "public" in the contemporary sense (a preformed subject, conscious of the presence of others, modifies her behaviour

[61] Jeremy Bentham, "Panopticon," ed. Miran Bozovic, *The Panopticon Writings*, London: Verso, 1995, 29-95.

accordingly), it is more accurately a panopticist topography. The presence of others is nebulous, and the surveilling of one's actions at a given moment cannot be presumed. It is the *possibility* of observation, not the actuality, that invites self-regulation, generating a virtuality of surveillance. This self-regulation is not one of compulsory moral duty and is not undertaken "in the name of" an organization, but is undertaken within a relational community (the network of friends); submission to this virtuality of surveillance is inscribed into Facebook's subject formation. This is the systemic equivalent of a first-level Kantian relationality, in which the use of reason is constrained by private interest. Facebook's subjectivity is also relational in the second Kantian sense: the subject is a member of the public "subject to" the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy, irrespective of her intentions or even her knowledge of them; this is a second-level constraint that parallels the "autonomy" of obeisant subject formation under a monarch. The subject must also submit to Facebook's legal spaces as a juridical microcosm of those employed throughout the U.S.

I have argued that Facebook operates through relational constraints as both a Kantian "private" and "public" space. It is also a Kantian public in the sense that reasoned critique of Facebook is possible from within it (user-groups exist for this purpose). Yet such critique seems to empty of autonomy if undertaken within a surveilled space, instead contributing to regulatory effects: in addition to assembling large quantities of personal information into a single database, Facebook "books" the political attitudes of its users. It is a false space of critique by Kantian standards, inviting the subject to enjoy autonomy, but for revelatory and recording purposes rather than for intellectual freedom or human progress. Indeed, if the Kantian emphasis on critique is emptied of its theological underpinnings, autonomy is uprooted. On the Kantian schema, a political system that is not committed to the teleological progress of humanity toward God/enlightenment lacks the obligation to safeguard autonomy and facilitate critique: *a secular enlightenment does not ensure intellectual liberty*. Instead,

promises of autonomy must be rooted in humanitarian interests, or in interests that benefit the *conatus* of the state – and, perhaps, capitalism. Especially in the post-9/11 context, the latter are cause for concern.

I suggested earlier that Facebook might invite "en-lighten-ment," conceived as a process of revealing or "*slanted panopticist exposure.*" To suggest that Facebook might be grooming "us" (and who exactly comprises "us?") for a panoptic society of total exposure verges on conspiracy theory. Yet I have argued that subjectivity within Facebook is preformed as "an engagement with available functions or forces, leading to transparency, insight and knowledge" (to quote my Introduction); this facilitates the Enlightenment ideal of total knowledge, and also its Foucauldian converse, total power. Facebook is certainly "an instrumental (or disciplinary) skein of assessments, regulations, revealings, and obscurings that operate within the field of emotion or affect," reifying identity terms and normalizing panopticism; and I have argued that "the intersecting of multiple units of meaning" within Facebook, namely the piece-by-piece logging of personal data and with it forms "in a progression toward unilateral intelligibility," insofar as its panopticist subjectivity is a normalizing operation of affect. What I must now argue is that Facebook produces "a determined encounter leading to the recognition and *recording* of surface identities."

Political theorist Jodi Dean[62] includes the official story of 9/11 in her definition of "conspiracy theory," as well as alternative explanations for the events of that day; she seems to use this term to describe an interpretive framework operating through affect, which more or less successfully interpellates subjects into its hermeneutic nexus. Using my own conspiracy theory as a hermeneutic for understanding Facebook, I now ask: *what sort of relationship to others is Facebook prefiguring or producing?* Within a previous version of Facebook, a button entitled "Report Jill Smith" appeared directly underneath "Add Jill Smith as your friend" in Facebook user-groups; currently, the

[62] Jodi Dean, "T500 Lecture," Theory, Culture, and Politics Program at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, 8 February 2007.

"reporting" button appears together with a "reply" option and a "send message" option. This button is an affective deployment of security discourse within Facebook that seems less trivial when one recalls the student who made a joke about assassinating George W. Bush (see note #7 above), who was reported to authorities by a fellow Facebook user, with serious consequences. Facebook's invitation to "report" other users echoes the dichotomous routing of judgement under totalitarian regimes that require one to "agree" with a state-sanctioned interpretative framework, or to "disagree" and face penalties. This occurred in Cultural Revolution-era China and Europe under Nazi occupation, and was eerily invoked by President Bush when he announced to the American media on November 6, 2001 that "You're either with us, or you're against us."[63] To speak conspiratorially, my concern is this: the totalitarian governments of history were able to wreak substantial horrors upon their citizenries with far less technological determinism than is currently available to world powers with the inclination to use it; and the first hurdle in deploying powers of surveillance and regulation is affect. Operating as the "innocuous" flipside to biometric scanning technologies and the subcutaneous microchipping of children,[64] internet sites like Facebook engineer affect, and do so amongst high school and university-age populations who have grown up on the cusp of tracking and containment technologies whose deployment is invariably framed within the teleological rhetoric of "safety." Such protectionism has been used to erode civil liberties in the post-9/11 U.S., and now permeates spaces of mobility throughout North American society, from neon subway signs to airport announcements: "For everyone's safety and security," "Report suspicious packages," "Do not leave bags unattended," etc. Technologies of transparency and disclosure, embodied within sites like Facebook that operate

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[63] "You Are Either With Us or Against Us," CNN.com, 6 November 01, 30 May 2007 <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>.

[64] See Cindy Katz, panel discussant on "Statecraft," Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Hilton Hotel, San Francisco, 20 April 2007, discussed in my Thesis Proposal.

through affect-driven subject-formation, are being normalized.[65] So too are penal tactics of humiliation predicated on exposure: the presence of photographers during Abu Ghraib torture sessions; the architecture through which extraordinary rendition operates (its prisoners bound, blindfolded, exposed, and surveilled on desert runways); even the ostensibly innocuous requirement that Maricopa County Jail inmates wear pink underwear and socks under their black and white striped uniforms.[66] Under contemporary secularization, the Enlightenment's promise of autonomy is extended for the sake of being withheld with more potency. This contemporary coupling of relational autonomy with obeisance subsumes Kantian maturity under infantilizing securitizations, and progress moves humanity not toward deific liberty, but towards a secure state in which total knowledge converges with total control.

Web designer Vishal Agarwala's 2006 piece "Does What Happens in the Facebook Stay in the Facebook?"[67] takes up similar conspiratorial themes from a Marxist perspective. Agarwala's piece connects Facebook with the business and political interests of its funding sources, taking the viewer through Facebook's worrying Privacy Policy and Terms of Use, into an analysis of how Facebook's now-obsolete "Pulse" feature compiles information about university populations to disseminate it to interested "partners," and then outlines connections between Facebook's funding sources and the American CIA, its Department of Defense,

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[65] That transparency and disclosure are convenient for the gathering of information is spoofed within "The Facebook Skit," a humorous music video by Penn Masala, a self-described "Hindi acapella group" based out of the University of Pennsylvania. The video makes clear how conducive Facebook is to compu-stalking and real-world stalking, using a parody of the Enrique Iglesias song "Hero." It contains lyrics such as, "Would you poke/if I sent you a poke/or would you run/and never poke back?/is it weird/that I know your hobbies?/will you be my friend tonight?/would you tremble/if I kissed your pics?" and a chorus that repeats, "I can be your Facebook stalker/I can click away the pain/I'll be on your wall forever/you can't take my mouse away." These lyrics are interspersed with a progression from screen-poking (with amorous fingers) and screen-snogging (with amorous lips and flurries of hair) to scenes of besotted men secretly following their amours down the street, or watching them exercise at the gym, or tracking them between classes with hand-drawn maps and getting kicked out of university libraries.

[66] Janice Lindsay, "Pretty In Pink? Not Always," *The Globe and Mail*, Sat. Dec. 22, 2007, L6.

[67] Vishal Agarwala, "Does What Happens in the Facebook Stay in the Facebook?", 2006, 15 April 2007 <http://albumoftheday.com/facebook/>. Hereafter referred to as "Agarwala, 2006."

and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA. According to Agarwala, the explicit mandate of D.A.R.P.A.'s Information Awareness Office is "to gather as much information as possible about everyone, in a centralized location, for easy perusal by the United States government" (Agarwala, 2006).

While Facebook has since addressed the concern that it sells user information to third-parties in shifty legalistic language that both insists it does not, and yet leaves open its right to do so (and its right to change the Terms of Use without warning), it has not addressed the second concern within its Privacy Policy or Terms of Use, except to note that one possible instance of third-party information-sharing would be the compliance with legal requirements to do so. Indeed, the Privacy Policy states that "By using Facebook, you are consenting to have your personal data transferred to and processed in the United States," and this message is reiterated under "Privacy" in the "Terms of Use" section (Facebook, "Privacy" & "Terms"). To return to the idea that participation in Facebook is voluntary, I will juxtapose the idea that extrication from Facebook is less so. Its Privacy Policy states: "even after removal, copies of User Content may remain viewable in cached or archived pages" (Facebook, "Privacy"); while the section titled "Sharing Your Information With Third Parties" reads, "Removed information may persist in backup copies for a reasonable period of time" (Facebook, "Privacy") without specifying what constitutes "reasonable," why this is necessary, or what purpose it serves. Presumably, cached pages allow for the smooth functioning of the profiles of other users; nevertheless, the wording here seems to exonerate Facebook from submitting to liberalist concerns about privacy, and creates a legal window for the harvesting of information by U.S. governmental agencies like the I.A.O. Participation in this "data-mining technology" is, of course, entirely voluntary.[68]

To return to the question of why Facebook is a subject worthy of study,

[68] According to Wikipedia, "Facebook... has denied any data mining is being done 'for the CIA or any other group,'" but the link it cites here is dead. The link is: "Morse, Jacob (2006). Facebook Responds. Cogito. Retrieved on 2006-04-03." Source: Wikipedia, "Facebook."

especially in weighty terms borrowed from Butler's cogent analysis of Abu Ghraib photography, I will give two answers: one, it isn't. Facebook is a middle- to upper-class high school and university virtual space operating mainly in English. Whatever its contribution to normalizing panopticism and fostering the expectation that one will render oneself and one's political affiliations transparent or assimilable into easily-processed bits of information, its reach is necessarily constrained by class and economic factors. It is far from a total space of surveillance, deployed mainly within an academic sector of the population. It also lends itself well to subversion and culture-jamming, for those who elect to disregard the requirement within its Terms of Use that one "provide" and "maintain" "accurate, current, and complete information" within every aspect of one's Profile, including but not limited to divulging one's full name, birthdate, and sexual preferences, and accurately detailing one's "relationships" with friends (Facebook, "Terms").

Two, studying Facebook is not only worthwhile but urgent. The American governmental milieu post-9/11 is one in which the gathering of information about citizens of the U.S. and beyond is no longer required to be disclosed under civil liberties laws; and the concern that Facebook is or could be used for compiling a centralized information bank warrants careful study. It warrants microscopic analysis, within the terms of a theologico-monarchichal post-Enlightenment project. As Butler writes in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, what is presently occurring is "an elaboration of administrative bureaucracies in which officials now not only decide who will be tried, and who will be detained, but also have ultimate say over whether someone may be detained indefinitely or not."[69] Within this climate, it seems reasonable to have reservations about voluntary but instrumental leisure activities such as Facebook. Although Facebook assures its users that they control the dissemination of their personal information (because their participation in Facebook is optional), as

[69] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London & New York: Verso, 2004, 2006, 51. Hereafter referred to as "Butler, *Life*."

Butler notes, "final control is not, [and] cannot be, an ultimate value" (Butler, *Life*, XIII). What Butler deems necessary seems to be *a post-Kantian acknowledgement of context, a public/private recognition operating through affect*, which grants that "there are others out there on whom my life depends," and that "[t]his fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that I can will away. No security measure will foreclose this dependency; no violent act of sovereignty will rid the world of this fact" (Butler, *Life*, XII).

While the "I" for Butler seems to refer to Americans, and the "anonymous others" to those who fly planes into buildings, her statement can be inverted: if "I" am the interpellated subject of the panoptic modality of Facebook, no specious assurance of my sovereignty within the Terms of Use will elide the fact that within a society where my movie preferences are being fed through the I.A.O. and checked against my air ticket purchases, "I" am certainly dependent on others for my survival. I am dependent within but also beyond Facebook, within the greater relationality of the society into whose affective frames Facebook is enfolded; frames of judgement through which my actions and attitudes are surveilled and assessed. Within this topography of judgement, the performative, hyperbolized spectre of "the security of the many" is increasingly prioritized over the material rights of the few, rhetorically justifying an increase in American "facebooking." A decontextualized, "mature" autonomy that furthers the project of human knowledge through disinterested critique (the project attributed to Kant by Foucault) cannot, here, result in "progress." What is needed is a Kantian acknowledgement of the relational contexts that prefigure and determine contemporary subjectivities, which must include the recognition of theologico-monarchical inheritances from the Enlightenment. The commitment of this inheritance to "en-lighten-ing" what is hidden, to prefiguring subjectivity and thereby regulating it, is rendered invisible within secularized analyses such as Foucault's. The proliferating effects of recent shifts in the deployment of this theological inheritance give urgency to the task of recognizing it and grappling

with it. Although the grounds of such a project are uncertain within a secular context, our *conatus* may depend upon it.

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Chapter 2
The Reviser and the Whistle-Blower: Dewey, Foucault and Education

(Scott Nicholson, Queens University)

This paper aims to compare and contrast essential features of the social philosophies of Michel Foucault and John Dewey. But to what end? Firstly, we might worry that the discourses that arise around such celebrated philosophers can become insular. Thus, so long as they are articulated with care and rigor, essays that compare the views of seminal thinkers can make critical insights by building discursive bridges – that is, by approaching old issues from new angles. Secondly and more to the point, I think that this particular comparison is interesting because it is a case in which two philosophers from distinct philosophical traditions have surprisingly similar views on topics like epistemology and the relationship between the self and the social community; yet despite these similarities, when it comes to their respective 'normative responses', or the manners in which they think one should respond to existing social norms, policies and institutions, their views diverge significantly.

I argue that this divergence is explained by the different roles that Foucault and Dewey have assumed as philosophers. Throughout his philosophical career, Foucault sought to counter identified sociopolitical problems by playing the role of 'the whistle-blower'. He aimed to investigate the dominant sociopolitical methods and institutions that were in place, and call attention to the oppression they impose. Dewey, on the other hand, thought that it was best toplay the role of 'the reviser'. He thought we should respond to sociopolitical

problems by first pragmatically evaluating them, and then experimentally implementing the provisional solutions we judge to be appropriate. I will compare and contrast these two roles, and then address a lingering question: with whom should we side? I conclude that a definitive answer is not necessary or even advisable.

I. Foucault

In the first of the 'two lectures' published in *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault voices his preference for localized criticism. He tells us that "the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research.... [The] local character of criticism indicates in reality an autonomous non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 81). Of course, in earlier works, Foucault was arguably a proponent of 'structuralism'; but his later view, as represented here and in other works, defies this label. For the post-structuralist Foucault, grand and systematic critical narratives, which purport to develop cohesive explanatory structures by abstracting from the particular features of sociohistorical contexts, are simplistic and intellectually dishonest. In their static totality, grand narratives are also in danger of becoming the kind of codified vehicles of oppression of which they are often critical. Given this, it is no surprise that in many places Foucault resists classifying his own philosophical understanding of the world. He does not have a systematic conception of his philosophy, and therefore consistently refuses to categorize it.

Some might find this refusal refreshingly modest. Others might find frustrating. The cynic might call it a strategic move designed to protect Foucault from being pinned down by his critics. Regardless, it makes our task more challenging. It is notoriously difficult to interpret Foucault's intent, as he seems to periodically

rearticulate and even reinvent his own position. Still, familiar themes repeatedly surface in his work and he seems to have an objective in mind that is essentially fixed: ultimately, his various analyses of power relationships are all intended to help illuminate resistance possibilities for the sake of the self.

In an essay entitled 'The Subject and Power', Foucault articulates this objective in retrospect. He tells us that his various investigations into local systems of knowledge, narratives of interpretation, and sites of institutional oppression have not been primarily concerned with the external mechanisms of power *per se*, but rather with the subject of power (i.e. the self) through which power is produced. This point is significant because it reveals that his problematization of social narratives and structures is not for the purpose of theoretical clarification. It is in aid of a practical concern. It aims to show how real people are subjected to, and oppressed by, formations of power. Foucault tells us that his starting point, or his primary concern, is *the struggle of the dominated.* As he sees it, this struggle has several features: (1) it is shared by many people across regional and national boundaries; (2) it is immediate and anarchistic – that is, at least initially, its goal is deconstruction rather than construction; (3) it asserts a right of difference; (4) it is opposed to established regimes of knowledge; (5) it is concerned not with abstract power, but with the effects of power on the subject – that is, it is concerned with the manipulation of the dignity, body, life and death of the self; and, (6) it is ultimately concerned with self-identity (Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 780-781).

The primacy Foucault attributes to the struggle of the dominated illuminates two important points. First, it shows his account is primarily motivated by a practical rather than a theoretical concern; second, it reveals that this concern is grounded in the paramount goal of self-emancipation. In his words:

> All these present struggles revolve around the question: Who are we? They are a refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state

> violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is (Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 781).

For Foucault, the subject is not just an identifiable determination. Insofar as it is possible to resist the production of power, the subject is not constituted by it. Towards the end of 'The Subject and Power' Foucault suggests that power and resistance co-exist in a reciprocal relationship. He claims that, "at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination" (Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 794). As a result, "there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight" (Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', 794). This suggests that no matter how strong or invasive the modes of power become, the subject possesses the capability, and perhaps even the inclination, to resist.

It is not exactly clear how we are to understand Foucault's notion of resistance. Is it a site of autonomy – a constant in the otherwise unstable self – that allows for genuine Nietzschean self-creation, or merely a negation of, and a reaction to, power? I would suspect that it is the former. But regardless of how we answer this, it is clear that Foucault does not articulate the practical sociopolitical means through which he thinks resistance should be carried out. That is, he denies having a partisan view that would prescribe a specific political vision. Of course, in the service of resistance, he indicates his desire to problematize the current dominant institutions and paradigms and bring about the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 81). But while this might be indicative of an agenda, it is hardly a robust sociopolitical prescription. When asked, in different contexts, what he thinks the 'solution' to our social problems is, he is either evasive or critical of the question. Any solution that we might attempt to give is in danger of becoming a new location of oppression.

For instance, in one interview, Foucault expresses the danger he sees in the move from ethics to politics, and denies the perceived analytical relation between the two (Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', 350). He argues that

once our moral norms are systematized in political and economic structures, we become hesitant to displace these structures, and as a result, the status quo is entrenched. Moralistic political reforms, while perhaps made with the best intentions, tend to construct resilient hegemonies. In an effort to avoid this problem, he refrains from offering a solution. His position is elucidated by a particularly poignant passage from the same interview:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy, but to hyper- and pessimistic activism. (Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', 343)

It is not Foucault's intention to specify a political constitution that would bring with it political freedom. Rather, it is to expose the modes of control, thereby illuminating possible avenues of resistance to those modes. This is not to say that the subject could ever become independent of power relationships. For Foucault, the institutions, norms and methodological paradigms that constitute the social reality are inevitably manipulative of psyches, bodies and actions. It is rather to say that in order to possess any semblance of emancipation, or the capacity for aesthetic self-creation, the dominated must resist.

II. Dewey

Foucault and John Dewey converge on many points. In line with Foucault, Dewey rejects theoretical political philosophy, where 'theoretical' is understood to refer to an abstract methodological approach that relies on a particular conception of human nature, or an idealistic counterfactual political model. In his 1927 work, *The Public & its Problems,* Dewey challenges the tenability of any project that aims to identify and justify the utopian polity. He denies that there is a sociopolitical organization, ideal or real, that could be accurately characterized as the natural culmination of progress, or the perfect political expression of our *a*

priori duties, and he outright rejects concepts like 'the social contract' and 'the state of nature'. Such notions are impractical fictions that are inappropriately used to justify existing sociopolitical organizations or theoretically attractive hypothetical organizations. Unlike the hypothetical polity, the actual polity is flawed and idiosyncratic: political institutions and policies are imperfect, and social communities and relationships are in constant flux. Therefore, no particular sociopolitical organization can be justified by any abstract hypothetical model. To understand and respond to the sociopolitical reality we must constantly engage in critical reassessment of it. Thus, like Foucault, Dewey prefers localized criticism; he thinks it is a mistake to rationalize actual or ideal polities by appealing to grand narratives.

The skepticism Dewey expresses towards sociopolitical system-building is indicative of his anti-foundationalist epistemology. Dewey argues that the quest for certainty, which aims to provide a solid foundation for knowledge, and which has occupied the minds of numerous Western philosophers, is doomed to fail in all philosophical contexts, not just the political. For him, the legitimacy of human knowledge is grounded in its practical value rather than in axiomatic epistemic foundations: we must trust that knowledge is accessible simply because this trust is required for practical living. Therefore, the quest for certainty is fruitless not just because, as Hume thought, the true nature of a mind-independent substance is epistemologically inaccessible. It is fruitless because the traditional notions of certainty and mind-independence are *dysfunctional* conceptual constructions, superfluous to the practical human relationship with the world, which in reality grounds human knowledge. They are not needed to explain the world, and have only served to turn our philosophical conceptions of it into dogma.

For Dewey, the pursuit of truth – defined as 'warranted assertability' – is best characterized as a scientific enterprise; he approves of the scientific method and advocates its adoption for all knowledge-seeking endeavours. However, it is important to note that he is not a positivist or scientific reductionist. His version

of the scientific method is much less systematic and rigid than the standard positivistic construal of it. As he sees it, the proper scientific method just consists in the perpetual process of (1) proposing hypotheses; (2) experimentally testing and evaluating hypotheses in light of new evidence; and, (3) modifying or discarding problematic hypotheses. He recognizes that many different kinds of observations can count as evidence, and excludes none in principle. In addition, the process itself is informed by, and cannot be divorced from, our individual and communal values. Nonetheless, in spite of these qualifications, he thinks that the empirical, experimental and skeptical treatment of knowledge employed by the scientific approach is the most able to secure truth, albeit provisional truth (Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*).

With regards to their epistemologies, though the specifics of their accounts may differ (i.e. Foucault would not share Dewey's affinity for the scientific method), we can see that the two philosophers have much in common. They both notice, as Foucault puts it, "a fragility... in the very bedrock of existence" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 80). They both posit that knowledge is not something that can be explained in abstract, transcendental terms, and are critical of the dominant schools of thought that attempt to do so. Rather, knowledge is shaped and solidified by its value and utility, its capacity to be used for social or practical ends, which can vary depending on the context.

Moreover, they are both critical of the undue authority enjoyed by established institutions and social structures. With his loaded notions of totality, subjection, production, usefulness and the like, Foucault makes use of a distinctive vocabulary that reveals power relations between oppressors and the oppressed, with special concern to how power relations operate through the oppressed. Dewey does not share this vocabulary, and tends not to talk too much about the notion of power *per se*. Nonetheless, he shares with Foucault a suspicion of the social regimes that exert influence over us materially, psychologically and epistemologically. For example, in *Individualism Old and*

New, Dewey engages in extensive criticism of a phenomenon he calls the 'new individualism'. *Individualism Old and New* is an old book, published in 1930, and thus one might expect its social criticisms to be obsolete. However, the text is surprisingly relevant. The new individualism Dewey speaks of is a social construction that manipulates the way in which we think of ourselves in relation to the world. Dewey suggests that the rise of an autonomous industrial-capitalist order in the modern era has produced widespread conformity to an instrumentalistic and economic rationale, which compels us to primarily value quantifiable material goods, rather than the intangible goods of spirituality, community and creativity. It has thus led to an increasingly pervasive materialistic understanding of the things that are valuable for the self.

Regardless of whether Foucault would agree with the thesis of *Individualism Old and New*, its content and style are remarkably Foucauldian. Like Foucault, Dewey describes how an external force can 'produce' a certain kind of knowledge, which structures the way in which selves understand themselves. And like Foucault, even if he does not take self-emancipation to be the ultimate end of social criticism, Dewey is deeply troubled by this external manipulation of the self. So while we may hesitate to mention Dewey and Foucault in the same breath, their accounts intersect at the identification of several key problems in the dominant intellectual and social cultures. Despite this crossover, there is a crucial difference that irrevocably divides them, located in what I call, for lack of a better expression, their 'normative responses'. This is manifest in their respective views on education, a topic to which I will now turn.

III. The Function of Education

Democracy and Education, one of Dewey's most influential works, deals with the social function of education. Education, broadly construed, is fundamental to Dewey's account, as he considers it to be the primary method by

which we attain knowledge. As such, he notes that 'education' includes but extends beyond the formal tutelage imparted by the school to include all the relevant knowledge one learns through social interaction. In his words, "society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life" (Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 6). Incidentally, we might note how this quote alludes to the notion of genealogy in order to explain the sociohistorical transmission of knowledge, a notion that is of course central for Foucault.

In light of this, Dewey asks, should education be left ungoverned, or should we construct institutions and policies in an attempt to direct it in accordance with our social values? He argues vehemently for the latter. Individuals, especially young individuals, need guidance. Since they are going to be guided by their social experiences regardless, he posits that we need to make sure to provide them with the right sort of guidance.

Although he never explicitly dedicated a text to the study of power relations within the school, it seems clear that Foucault would disagree with Dewey's stance on this issue. Passages in *Discipline and Punish* indicate that his treatment of the notion of discipline is supposed to be applicable to the Western school setting, and perhaps to other settings where individuals are 'educated' (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136-138, 141, 147). In the chapter on discipline, he argues that the new rationalized version of discipline that is characteristic of the modern age is both pervasive and invasive. It controls the process of education as well as the result – meaning that it pacifies and uses the 'docile bodies' of its subjects to obtain the results it wants. Discipline in this context is insidious and inconspicuous; it operates modestly or furtively rather than triumphantly. Docility is achieved through the actions of the educators and consequent reactions of the educated, but also through the centralized architectural construction of the school and the organizational methods it utilizes: for instance, the implementation of standardized testing. Through their organization, "disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural,

functional and hierarchical" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 148). By implication, there is little doubt that Foucault's sole response to both the hierarchical institution of the school and the informal modes of education that pervade social society would be one of criticism and defiance. Moreover, I suspect he would say that this is the only legitimate philosophical response.

But, for Dewey, this is a highly pessimistic and problematic approach, especially when it comes to education. Dewey would say that it is much more profitable to ask: what is the best way to educate, rather than, what is the best way to resist the inevitable hierarchy imposed by institutions and modes of education? He does argue that educational reforms are needed to make the methods of the school less standardized and less hierarchical, so as to provide education that develops well-rounded, intellectually critical individuals, instead of narrow-minded automatons who are only capable of regurgitating information. But ultimately the logic of education requires us to provisionally construct an organized set of educational policies and institutions in order to achieve pragmatic pedagogical, and ultimately social, goals.

Dewey does not wish to impose upon us a comprehensive conception of what a good society should look like; he is not a utilitarian. But he thinks that in order for society to be less hegemonic than it is – shaped less by arbitrary hierarchies, and more by the considered judgments of individuals aiming for justice – it must be democratic. For him, a healthy democracy is one that is collectively and prudently directed by the members of its community. In order for this goal to be achieved, community members must first be socially intelligent and participatory. Thus formal education has a pivotal role. It is tasked with the development of good democratic participants, the kind of people who critically engage with society and make informed suggestions for its improvement. So while formal education is obviously a mode of control, it is more liberating than oppressive. For Dewey, it would be nonsensical to advocate constant resistance to

all educative modes of control, as these modes play an indispensable role in the constitution of both our society and our personal identity, for better or for worse.

Foucault could, and likely would, further criticize Dewey's view on at least two counts. First, he might condemn his conception of an intelligent, authentic democratic society for being idealistic and naïve. Once methods and institutions in aid of this ideal are put into place, they tend to become static and immovable. Due to the logic embedded in the relationship between coercive measures and the subjects they coerce, it is perhaps inevitable that the methods and institutions will re-codify as rationalized relationships of oppression. Therefore, Dewey's vision is unsuitable for critical philosophy. Second, he might criticize Dewey for the primacy he attributes to the importance of social unity. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey highlights the importance of developing shared social values (Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Ch. 3). He seems to favour solidarity in the democratic community for the sake of social progress. But if this is an indispensable component of Dewey's social philosophy, he is faced with a significant challenge. If recent movements in political discourse (such as the politics of recognition) have taught us anything, it is that policies of assimilation that are implemented for the sake of unity bring with them a host of ethical problems, including especially the institutionalization of disrespect and intolerance towards cultural minority groups. James Marshall emphasizes this aspect of Dewey and suggests that it makes him particularly vulnerable to a Foucauldian critique. Indeed, Marshall goes so far as to accuse Dewey of being "unashamedly an accultarist" who fails to see a problem with imposing homogenizing social policies (Marshall, 'On What We Might Hope', 314-315).

In answer to the latter criticism, I would suggest that Dewey's view might be formulated in such a way as to circumvent the charge of accultarism. That is, whether he is or not, Dewey need not hold the view that, in order for a democracy to work properly, minority cultures must be assimilated into the dominant culture. I believe it would be a mistake to think that this commitment is required or

justified by either the preservation of democratic stability or the tenets of Dewey's core social philosophy. As the politics of recognition have stressed, while the cultural diversity of a pluralistic democracy might sometimes lead to conflict or a lack of cohesion within the community, the deviant but deeply-held values of marginalized members of society should not be discounted, as they are essential for maintaining the personal identities of those members and the cultural identities of the groups to which they belong.

Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that it is impossible to find in a multicultural democracy a degree of unity sufficient for sustaining an intelligent democratic community. Indeed, I would suggest to the contrary that cultural diversity within a democratic community might, in some circumstances, promote reflection among both the citizenry and the government on the cultural bias inherent in the dominant values of the community. That is, the existence of cultural diversity could potentially play an educative role by prompting community members and officials to be more self-critical of their own values and judgments. So instead of exacerbating a divisive threat, the skillful maintenance of a culturally diverse society could lead to a more progressive democracy that institutes wiser, more considered, social policies.

According to the Deweyan model, if after discursive reflection the socially intelligent democratic community collectively identifies 'accultarism' as a pernicious problem, then it should work towards resolving this problem. Dewey's model requires us to mold individuals into socially intelligent citizens, people who are aware of relevant issues and able to make informed contributions in order to promote a lively and self-conscious democratic community. But it does not necessarily require us to initiate homogenization strategies, or to marginalize alternative cultural values.

The former charge of naiveté does more damage to Dewey's account. How are we to be sure that the sociopolitical structures and methods we endorse for the sake of developing a democratic community do not become entrenched

mechanisms of new pernicious power relationships? The answer is, of course, that we cannot be sure. But, again, perhaps this challenge only requires a revision of Dewey's account rather than the disposal of it. Dewey might agree that our institutional structures should somehow take heed of this Foucauldian skepticism. Perhaps he would suggest that the constitution of the school should be revised in order to address some of the problems Foucault identifies. But he would nonetheless maintain that, in the modern era, barring the implementation of a feasible alternative, a system of well-organized and regulated educational institutions is required for fostering a socially intelligent populace. Therefore, the education system itself is highly pragmatic, not just for the functioning of society as a whole, but also for the fostering of independent intellectual thought. And I am inclined to agree. Surely a well-organized system of institutions and pedagogical methods is valuable for both society and the individual; otherwise, many of us could hardly acquire the intellectual tools needed for critical inquiry.

Conclusion

As I suggested at the beginning of this paper, it seems to me that the most fundamental differences between Dewey and Foucault stem from their different perspectives on the role of the philosopher (given that the roles they take on themselves are the same as the roles they think should be taken on by philosophers in general). Certainly, they both make social problems their priority. To borrow a Nietzschean expression, they are both cultural physicians, aiming to cure the intellectual and social ills that have infected their respective cultures. But they have very different 'prescriptions' in mind.

As the reviser, Dewey constructs an optimistic model of how our politics might cautiously and reflectively progress. His task is grounded in the need he sees for developing a responsible, self-critical, democratic community pursuing the fulfillment of the interests of its members, a task that is crucial for social

improvement. On the other hand, Foucault, the whistle-blower, pessimistically reminds us that this model might never be realized. His task is instead ultimately grounded in the unending pursuit of an existential emancipation of the self. A commitment to this pursuit requires continuous disobedience via criticism and resistance. While Foucault does not deny the need for the advancement of positive political goals (a fact to which his reform-oriented political activism attests), he abjures any philosophical rationale for positive politics. In so doing, he leaves us without method and without political direction. He can give us no satisfactory theoretical response to important questions like 'how should we formulate educational policy'? And, 'what sorts of educational institutions should we aim to develop'?

Foucault seeks to locate and remind us of the constancy, invisibility and heterogeneity of oppression, whereas Dewey aims to move past this concern in order to provide us with a method for constructing provisional sociopolitical solutions. Ostensibly, with its flexibility and modesty, a Deweyan approach is able to both provide some degree of guidance, and attend to many Foucauldian criticisms: Deweyan political philosophy can offer a methodology for establishing positive political goals and policies, but it is formulated such that it is not totalitarian, transcendental, or even essentially associated with any particular political ideology (other than a commitment to the maintenance of a thriving democratic community). Even so, the Foucauldian will maintain that the institutions and policies we develop and implement in accordance with a Deweyan approach will still become codified, resistant to change and oppressive. Without Foucault's critical toolbox, and the urgent emphasis he places on the value of self-emancipation, we may fail to notice insidious power relationships, even when we strive to be vigilant.

With this back and forth between the two positions a key question remains unanswered: given the accuracy of their shared criticisms and concerns, with whom should we side? Both philosophers present compelling, urgent cases that

cannot be discounted. Thus there is no clear answer one way or another. But neither is there a need for one. Social policies and institutional frameworks can concurrently be constructively modified by Deweyan revisers and critiqued by Foucauldian whistle-blowers; social philosophers can concurrently tackle identified social problems from different standpoints. Therefore, the 'normative responses' of Dewey and Foucault are compatible insofar as they fulfill distinct but important social philosophical roles within the realm of critical inquiry. Since they are making different points for different purposes, I see no reason why we cannot confront social policies and institutions in light of the wisdom of both philosophers. And I would suggest that, if we are to seriously aim for social improvement, we ought to take heed of both styles of social criticism.

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Truth

Chapter 3

Foucault and Historical Epistemology: Development and Critique of the Philosophy of the Norm

(Samuel Talcott, University of the Sciences, Philadelphia)

Whether Foucault does philosophy or, as he says in one of his lecture courses, something that has to do with philosophy, the demands and goals that animate his work are shared with those found in the writings of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem.[1] This paper will show how the distinct versions of historical epistemology developed by each of these two sought to enliven the activity of thought by giving a critique of scientific rationalities and the truths that these pretend to secure as 'Truth.' Neither seeks to pass judgments directly, but to expose the ways in which rationalities are produced in the historical development of sciences. Canguilhem, in particular I argue, is important for Foucault since he investigates the notion of science as a normative enterprise by rooting all discussion of norms in the original, creative power of the living as institution of norms. Foucault, I will argue, must be viewed as developing and responding to their approach, with appropriate methodological and conceptual variations, in both his archaeologies as well as his writings on power. While he would seek to distance himself from aspects of Canguilhem's thinking, and its appeal to the powers of the living, he brought his mentor's methods and concepts of research to bear on the knowledge of entire epochs. And while he sought to develop a new analytics of power, he did so within the framework of the ambivalence of the

[1] On the claim that he does something that concerns philosophy, see his introductory lectures to *Security, Territory, Population*, given in 1977-78, published in French in 2004, translated into English in 2007.A

norm, as revealed by Canguilhem.[2] The paper proceeds by briefly elucidating Bachelard's historical epistemology, then explaining Canguilhem's work on the normal and the pathological as a response to difficulties in this epistemology, before showing how Foucault's archaeologies and analyses of political power continue to elaborate the problems, methods, and concepts of his predecessors, while re-interpreting the status of norms developed by Canguilhem's philosophy.

Gaston Bachelard's work in historical epistemology must be addressed briefly, since it is of such importance to both Canguilhem and Foucault. His *Le nouvel esprit scientifique (The New Scientific Spirit)* reflects on the necessity of a new non-Cartesian epistemology, given the events that were sweeping physics at the turn of the 20th century, causing its rupture with the classical physics of Galileo, Descartes, and Newton.[3] The final chapter of this text dedicates itself to showing the transformations that have been wrought by new conceptions in physics, such as Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which relegated earlier claims of unlimited predictability on the basis of a given mechanical system to the realm of defunct knowledge. Drawing on the methods of the new physics, Bachelard shows how the physical sciences were now treating objects in terms of the relations governing their very existence as well as their interaction with other objects, or particles in this case. And so, through its own experimental research, early 20th century physics was calling a Cartesian epistemology into question and demanding the formulation of a new account of knowledge that would not rely on simple natures as the criteria of understanding and truth. No longer is it possible to pursue a clear and distinct idea of a thing and thereby arrive at knowledge of it. The new physics, as Bachelard characterized it, did not primarily seek to explain

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[2] Even his last major works are published under the sign of historical epistemology, especially as developed by Canguilhem. Answering why his project had changed so dramatically, he writes, "It was curiosity...not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself...There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (History of Sexuality, Volume 2, p8).

[3] Bachelard, *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (Paris, 1934), translated as *The New Scientific Spirit* [Spirit] by Arthur Goldhammer.

the world, but to complicate it, that is, to show that apparently simple natures—such as fire or water—exist as complex sets of relations. Indeed, even the most elementary particles such as hydrogen or oxygen are now understood at an atomic level in terms of the different relations and motions internal to themselves. The first point of Bachelard's epistemology, then, concerns the relation between reason, that old friend of the philosopher, and scientific activity. As he understands it, philosophical reason no longer has the authority or power to legislate and determine the objects of knowledge; the hope for a philosophically delimited and directed physics should thus be set aside. Contemporary philosophy, exemplified by the phenomenological call for the critique of the sciences and their re-orientation to the life world, is also criticized, therefore, on account of its claim to authority over the physical sciences.[4] Science, he argues, does not proceed by deduction, but by induction from rigorously and technologically controlled experiments. This does not destroy the necessity of theory in the production of knowledge, but rather transforms it into part of the set of techniques used in the production of new objects for experience and thought. He writes, "Thus we begin to think in terms of *prior* structure; ...in terms of *projects* for constructing the structure of the atom, *plans* for getting at its reality. In other words, we begin to fashion theoretical molds to shape our experimental technique."[5] Breaking with classical physics, contemporary science is inductive, proceeding from experimental results, but it produces these experiences itself according to hypotheses that operate as speculative molds, standards, models, or norms. Physics, Bachelard suggests, is now a normative science in its own right.

Bachelard formulates epistemology as the project of developing and exploring the rationalities produced by modern scientific disciplines. This means investigating the history of the diverse rationalities instituted by the sciences. Furthermore, this research is directed to the moment when a scientific rationality

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[4] See Spirit, p176. Compare Husserlian phenomenology as presented in the *Cartesian Meditations*, originally presented as lecture in Paris in 1929.
[5] Spirit, p156.

comes into existence, when a break is instituted with the habitual ways in which human beings engage the world around them as an immediate given. As he sees it, the human, quotidian world and all the objects one encounters there, which we encounter and navigate by unconscious habit for the most part, function as epistemological obstacles to rationalization. Fire, for instance, is experienced first and foremost as a basic human phenomenon, informing the psyche shared by people the world over.[6] For this reason, Bachelard developed a psychoanalysis of fire[7] in order to root out these convictions which form so many obstacles to the development of a truly objective study of the physical and chemical processes experienced as fire. Operating on the assumption of such breaks, historical epistemology traces out the norms guiding a specific form of scientific rationality. But just because the techniques and practices of the sciences give rise to new objects of possible experience, this does not mean that epistemology is simply a servant to the sciences. Focusing instead on the history of these rationalities, the epistemologist seeks to situate them in a particular moment and time, and thereby vaunt the creative powers of the human intellect to produce new kinds of experience and new ways of thinking. Thus, he writes:

> if we really want to understand our intellectual evolution, wouldn't we do better instead [of returning to the phenomenological life world] to pay heed to the anxiety of thought, to its quest for an object, to its search for dialectical opportunities to escape from itself, for opportunities to burst free of its own limits? In a word, wouldn't we do better to focus on thought in the process of objectification? For if we do, we can hardly fail to conclude that such thought is creative.[8]

Instead of serving the sciences, historical epistemology serves to remind scientists of the origin of their work in the anxiety of thought about what appears to be true, in the fear that the most certain of truths can be nothing but an illusion. Such an epistemology functions, therefore, as a double critique. On the one side, it

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[6] See his *La psychanalyse du feu* (Paris, 1937).
[7] *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* does not produce a precise meaning for psychoanalysis as he practices, but appears to draw greatly upon C.G. Jung's work.
[8] See Spirit, p176.

castigates philosophers who think that the sciences must be brought back into communion with the life-world, while on the other, it reminds scientists themselves that their activity is never the result of a universally guaranteed method or truth, but always only an operation performed with faith in our intellectual powers to realize truth in the face of illusion. The epistemologist warns them both about the dangers of naturalizing human thought, whether in the scientific discovery of Truth or the philosophical recourse to the life-world as ultimate foundation of human Truth. Whether speaking to the scientist or the philosopher, the epistemologist's goal is to vitalize and enliven thought's creative powers by studying its historical self-objectification in the creation of new phenomena according to its own norms.

Bachelard's epistemological works were dedicated to physics and mathematics, a fact Georges Canguilhem would have lamented for its conformity to the tradition of French rationalism, which then governed institutionalized philosophy, grounding its authority in Descartes. Bachelard's attempt to develop a non-Cartesian epistemology capable of expressing the methodological creativity of scientific enterprises in their own development, rather than suffocate under a set of universal rules for the direction of the mind, is a clear attempt to break with the prevailing understanding of rationalism. Yet this focus on the traditional objects of French rationalism belies, for Georges Canguilhem, an inability not only to break with Cartesian conceptions of nature but also to explain the source of the diverse rationalities produced by different scientific disciplines. The francophone tradition of critical rationalism, and Bachelard despite himself, "makes man forget that he is alive." But, continues Canguilhem:

> it must be recognized that life is generation, and for man, as for all sexuated living things, it is linked to a function whose study poses problems...All biological problems, beginning with and because of this fundamental problem, are problems of "affective overdetermination." Life is not merely, from the perspective of a rationalist philosophy, a troubled object [*objet*

> *troublé*], but a troubling object[*objet troublant*]; it is not merely an ambiguous or equivocal object, but a scandalous one.[9]

Bachelard, then, is important to Canguilhem precisely insofar as he vaunts the creative, vital powers of thinking, although he is to be criticized insofar as he remains within the confines of classical epistemology and its prized subject matter: physics. A further sign of Bachelard's difficulties is his inability to fully integrate his epistemological studies with his later studies in the poetics of human experience and aesthetic creativity. Canguilhem, pushing Bachelard's approach further, develops, both in his famous *Essai sur quelque problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique*,[10] as well as in unpublished course notes from the 1940s and 50s,[11] a biological kind of philosophy. This biological kind of philosophy posits living as the fundamental beginning point for all inquiries into man's activities, from the most mundane to the most speculative. This biological kind of philosophy allows for a reinterpretation of historical epistemology, one that exploits Bachelard's insights while reorienting them toward the study of scientific rationalities that never manage to institute a complete break with the life world and human experience in it. Canguilhem's work thus focuses on the sciences of life, especially physiology and pathology, as they relate to and depend upon the art of medicine. In short, it is in their historical existence as living that humans are both the subjects and objects of knowledge.

Through this focus, Canguilhem hopes to produce a philosophy that is better fit to address the modern crises in knowledge, the sciences' tendency to

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[9] This quotation is taken from notes for a course preserved at the *Centre d'Archives de Philosophie, d'Histoire, et d'Editions des Sciences* [CAPHES] housed at the ENS in Paris, France ("Philosophie et biologie," 1946-47.) The opening lines of the paragraph help explain why Canguilhem would have proposed sexuality as a topic for qualifying examinations in philosophy, a subject that Foucault was asked to discuss, and about which he is said to have vigorously complained. See David Macey's biography of Foucault on this (*The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 1993).

[10] His *Essay on a Few Problems Concerning the Normal and the Pathological* was published in 1943, it is available in translation, together with the additions from the 1966 edition, entitled *Le normal et le pathologique* (translated as *The Normal and the Pathological* in 1978). I refer to the French edition as *Essai*.

[11] See note IX.

abstract from the world of human experience to the point of losing their way in this world and turning back upon and disrupting it. In short, he hopes to do what Bachelard did not, to produce a normative and concrete philosophy—a philosophy that considers the sciences insofar as they might respond to and seek to address concrete human problems. This might lead one to expect Canguilhem to produce a philosophical system centered on the formulation of normative judgments. One might imagine, for example, hearing him tell medical doctors to give up their uncritical acceptance of scientific knowledge concerning the normal and the pathological states of their patients. While his famous *Essai* certainly leads its readers in the direction of this conclusion, it explicitly rejects contemporary philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom that would enable an individual to pronounce judgments that the rest of his fellow men should follow.[12] Instead, for Canguilhem, "...philosophy can be seen as an effort of mind to give value to human experience through critical examination and systematic appreciation of the values spontaneously embodied in civilizations and cultures" by the sciences and their truths, political and religious institutions and their good works, the arts and their creations and dreams.[13] The modern practice of philosophy, called into existence by the demands arising from the proliferation of diverse values in modern society, takes shape as an attempt to clarify unconscious conflicts of value in relation to concrete human experience. Its task, then, is primarily theoretical when it comes to the public work of the philosopher, whose aim is to produce a theory of values, which as such does not take the form of a code of conduct, or an inventory of justified moral precepts. It is worth noting that Canguilhem himself never published his claims about philosophical activity, and although they are available in print today, at least in part,[14] they are taken from unpublished course notes. Instead of publishing a theory of the proper method for

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[12] See the *Essai's* opening pages.

[13] See *A Vital Rationalist* (Zone Books, 1994), an English language presentation of excerpts from his published works and presentation of excerpts from his 1942-43 course on "*Les Normes et le Normal*." The notes for the entire course are preserved at CAPHES (see note IX).

[14] See the closing chapters of *A Vital Rationalist*.

doing philosophy, Canguilhem developed his thinking around the concrete human problems of illness and suffering. It is around these problems that Canguilhem developed his concrete, normative philosophy by elucidating the often unnoticed[15] conflicts between the values of medicine and those of the sciences. While science seeks truth, the medical arts seek to perform a therapeutic function on behalf of an individual in pain. The text of his *Essai* is devoted to the elucidation of the problems that have arisen over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries in the constant contact between these different disciplines. Canguilhem thus responds to human problems, but does not assert its ability to resolve these problems, so much as elucidate their problematic correlation by showing the intertwining history of the value of health and the value of truth. His hope, as he announces in the preface, is to clarify certain methodological problems in philosophy by inquiring into this history. There is no hope of directly reforming the practice of others, only of making a critical contribution to current perceptions of values and the beliefs maintained on their basis.

At the heart of the tenuous, but inevitable relations between medicine and the life sciences stands the norm.[16] The book divides into two parts, the first inquiring into the question of whether normal and pathological states of living things differ only in terms of quantitative variations from normal function, the second concerned with the possibility of objective sciences of the normal and the pathological, or physiology and pathology. The first part argues that the primacy of normal states implicit in the claim of functional homogeneity between the two states actually conceals the root of all medical art and knowledge—the fact of illness. Only because people have felt pain do doctors exist, only because people have attempted to respond to such problems does the scientific study of health and

[15] He uses the word 'unconscious,' a trace of Freud's importance for his thinking.
[16] He defines the norm, in his course on "Norms and the Normal": "A norm or rule is the determination of a world of reference for an existing thing according to a requirement [*une Exigence*]. This reference has as its result the conferral of a Value on some Object, Event, or Act in their relation to some implicit or explicit end, only imagined [*visée*], or much more closely pursued [*bien effectivement recherchée*]."

illness arise. These experiences also establish the qualitative distinction between normal and pathological states, in spite of any scientific reduction of the two to quantitative variations within a single function. Living things produce their own norms creatively in interaction with the environment they inhabit. Thus, while it is clear that the normal and the pathological states are different in terms of conscious experience, Canguilhem argues that each state has its own set of distinctive norms and thus they are actually distinct, not merely in a subjective sense.[17] While there may be quantitative variation in function between two states, the experience of illness guarantees that the one extreme is qualified as pathological, the other as normal. Nevertheless, since death alone deprives the living of the fact that it regulates its own existence, it always possesses its own norms of existence, whether healthy or sick.

Canguilhem captures this account of the living with the term *normative*. Its philosophical meaning, as a judgment that qualifies a fact relative to a norm, is subordinate to its wider meaning, as that which institutes norms.[18] Normativity, he argues, refers to the fact that living things have a power to institute their own norms, thereby creating value and meaning, without conscious awareness. In the face of concrete events, the living thing responds by positing norms that govern and regulate its activities. While successful norms allow for the maintenance of health, those that are not successful allow for continued life, but one qualified by pain and suffering, in short by pathology. Normativity, as the creation and adoption of new norms for living, is an errant power, since it develops these only in response to a crisis, and without predetermined knowledge of the proper norm to adapt. Furthermore, it is only because of such normativity, inherent without any self-awareness in all living things, that philosophical normativity, or any other form of conscious normative judgment, is possible. As Canguilhem sees it,

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[17] Consider the example of blood coagulation—this would be the norm when cut, but not if the blood coagulates in the veins.
[18] *Essai*, p77-79.

consciously normative judgment exists in embryo within the unconscious, normative activity of living.

Canguilhem went on to focus most of his attention on historical epistemology, bringing his research on the normativity of life to bear on the philosophy and history of science. In other words, he responds to Bachelard's account of the sciences as enterprises with a history, which constitute themselves as autonomous on the basis of specific theoretical norms, by first agreeing with Bachelard, and then arguing that norms themselves, even those that give rise to and distinguish the sciences from other kinds of activity, have their origin in the activity of living itself. The life sciences are particularly fine candidates for this interpretation, because the subject who pursues them is herself a living being. The mathematician is not herself a mathematical being, whereas the pathologist is necessarily a living being who could become ill, who will one day die. This explains, for Canguilhem, why the life sciences do not admit nearly as high a degree of formalization as mathematics, for example. The history of the life sciences focuses, therefore, less on the institution of dramatic breaks with previous non-science, and more on the way irremovable epistemological obstacles give shape to the life sciences. The experience of pain and suffering in illness and the medical need for knowledge that can be employed for therapeutic purposes are the conditions of possibility for any science of normal or pathological functions. These experiences of error, as Canguilhem refers to them, are the concrete basis of medical art and life science. Just as the experience of crisis functions as the source of new normative intentions in living things, so too the obstacles faced by the sciences, and the errors committed by them, become the favored content of the history of science in its goal of revitalizing contemporary thought. Thus the task of thinking, as he pursued it, is not primarily the production of philosophical normativity, i.e., judgments that seek to measure a fact against a norm, but the description of the errors that are so many normative intentions called forth by the experience of crisis. It is in these errors that the creativity of rationalities can be

found, and it is this primacy of error for the living itself that allows Canguilhem to downplay the importance of distinguishing between the normal and the pathological. In the end, as Foucault would put it in 1978 and again in 1984, Canguilhem's biological kind of philosophy and his historical epistemology form two aspects of one and the same philosophy of error.[19]

Foucault's earliest articles, on psychology, are written with either implicit or explicit reference to Canguilhem's theses on the normal and the pathological.[20] This is hardly surprising since Canguilhem himself, both in his courses and publicly, had himself engaged psychology.[21] Indeed, Canguilhem would go on to direct Foucault's primary thesis on the history of madness and, after reading it, the famously difficult professor told Foucault that it should be defended without changes.[22] Both authors showed themselves to be wary of the pretensions of scientific psychology, although Foucault, over the course of his career, would try to take his distance from Canguilhem's philosophy in two important ways.[23] First, as early as *Naissance de la clinique*, Foucault could be read to suggest that Canguilhem's account of the relation between the life sciences and medicine needed to be complicated, since his definition and understanding of the living as normative might itself be the product of the particular history unearthed in the book. As Foucault tells it, the sudden appearance of the teaching hospital with the

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[19] See the two versions of the essay originally written as the introduction to the English language translation of *The Normal and the Pathological*. The later version, the last text that Foucault was to sign before his death, is a limited modification of the earlier version destined for a special issue of the *Revue de metaphysique et de morale* on Canguilhem. Both versions are contained in the French edition of Foucault's *Dits et écrits* [DE] (Quarto Gallimard, 2001).

[20] See, for example, either of the essays on psychology published in 1957, "La psychologie de 1850 à 1950" and "La recherché scientifique et la psychologie," both contained in DE.

[21] One should consider his infamous paper "*Qu'est-ce que la psychologie?*" first read December 13, 1956 before the *Collège Philosophique*. It is this very same paper that Lacanian psychoanalysts re-printed 10 years later in *Cahiers pour l'analyse* (2, March). It was originally published in *Revue de métaphysique et de moral* (1958). There are also copious course notes on the history of psychology preserve at the CAPHES (see note IX).

[22] See Macey's biography of Foucault for this point.

[23] It is also worth noting that, before this, the young Foucault adopted an Althusserian approach as he argued for a scientific approach to psychology, one being realized in Soviet Russia. On this, consult the original version of his *La maladie mentale et personalité* (1954), in which he argued that capitalist societies produced mental illness and other distortions in personality. The history of the change in his ideas about psychology, however, would have to be explored elsewhere.

advent of the Revolution and the following social-political upheavals in France changed the way in which the body and life itself were conceived.[24] What Canguilhem had claimed to be the nature of the living thing, Foucault's book suggests was a contingent reality, dependent on events in the order of knowledge associated with social-political problems. This criticism is linked to the other major way in which Foucault sought to distance himself from his *bon maître*, by developing an archeology of knowledge, not just an epistemology of singular sciences. While Canguilhem had limited his work to a very narrow field, Foucault sought to excavate the contours and terrain of knowledge (*savoir*) for entire epochs.[25] In doing this, however, Foucault employed the same general approach as Canguilhem. Rather than seeking to pass judgment on the knowledge of an epoch, his archeological method sought only to describe the knowledge implicit in all the statements for an epoch, charting the geography of knowledge within which sciences did constitute themselves. And as Canguilhem said of Foucault in an influential review of his *Les mots et les choses*, "No philosophy today is less normative than Foucault's, none is more alien to the distinction between the normal and the pathological."[26] This might seem to suggest that Canguilhem and Foucault employ absolutely different methods. In fact, however, Foucault is carrying through, and developing the goals of historical epistemology, adapting them to a new terrain of study. Just as Canguilhem thought that a concretely normative philosophy could only proceed by avoiding judgment about good and bad, instead describing unnoticed conflicts of value in contemporary science and society, Foucault's archeologies, written in order to call into question the self-assured, complacent work of the human sciences, proceeded by patient empirical research into the fields of discourse out of which they could arise. Archeology revealed that the object of these sciences was not a timeless phenomenon, but the

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[24] See Foucault's *Naissance de la Clinique* (1961).
[25] See the *Les mots et les choses* (1965), translated as the *Order of Things*, and *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969).
[26] "Exhaustion of the Cogito, or the Death of Man?" by Canguilhem, translated and re-published in the *Cambridge Companion to Michel Foucault*, 2nd edition, Gutting, ed. (CUP, 2005).

recent invention of events in the ordering of knowledge. Following the work of Bachelard and Canguilhem, archeology served as a spur to rouse both philosophy and the human sciences from their dogmatic slumber and make them question their most secure convictions. Thus, methodologically speaking, Foucault's work in the 1960s, is essentially a development of the methods of historical epistemology. Both Bachelard and Canguilhem each claim that philosophy should not pass normative judgment upon the knowledge of an individual discourse, rather, at best, it aspires to critique the form of these judgments, thereby provoking a critical attitude towards the truths of the sciences. Canguilhem pushed this further by developing a philosophy that elucidated hidden conflicts between the values of medicine and those of science; but, ultimately, it would be left to the reader to decide how to respond once possessed of knowledge about these conflicts. This puts Canguilhem in the interesting position of seeking to subject his reader to the primacy of medicine over scientific research into life without, at the same time, issuing an imperative that the reader agree. Indeed, the presupposition of his work is that such subjection cannot but bring the attentive reader to realize the implicit order of values in these practices and thus feel compelled to support it. Foucault adopts this technique[27] for archeology—the description of the empire of statements for a given epoch and the exposition of the mutations that support the appearance of new discursive regimes—which does not make the explicit claim that it is wrong to try to produce a science of man, but drives the reader to grasp the limitations of such a science and its pretensions. Instead of producing a judgment, Foucault is content to say that the figure of man, a recent one, is destined to fade away.[28]

While Foucault does distance himself from his mentor in certain respects, especially for the early assumptions about the nature of the living itself as a transhistorical phenomenon, it must be stressed that the archeological works, like

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[27] It might be interesting to try to trace this technique back to Descartes. Consider the Preface to the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1642).

[28] See the closing pages of *Les mots et les choses*.

Canguilhem's historical epistemology in relation to its objects, take over the methods of objective description in order to be able to better critique the scientific pretension to know and direct 'Man' in his entirety. One might criticize Canguilhem's appeal to error because of its definition in opposition to scientific conceptions of truth, but he thinks that this is the only way possible to combat successfully scientific pretensions vis-à-vis the practice of medicine. The sciences must be shown on and in their terms to be open to other possibilities, if their truths are to be placed in question. So too Foucault's archeologies claim to deploy the methods of careful empirical research into the archive in order to unearth the topography of discourse past and the conditions of meaningful participation in it and, through this, being able to lay claim to truth. Foucault too develops his work from within the human sciences, not for the sake of furthering their extension, but for disputing their claims to exhaustive knowledge of Man. Thus he argues that archeology is not a science, "but in almost all its dimensions...the enterprise is related to the sciences, and to analyses of a scientific type, or to theories of rigorous criteria."[29] While Foucault moves beyond the truth-error couplet that Canguilhem deployed, he does appeal to the norms of careful empirical research, but only for the sake of revealing the ways in which the truths and objects of the human sciences came to be contingently satisfied. Archeology, in this sense, is not a science but a counter-science.

Foucault's later work, oriented towards the elucidation of both discursive and non-discursive practices must also be understood in its relation to historical epistemology and Georges Canguilhem in particular. This is because Canguilhem's account of the norm in the *Essai* (1943) bears an implicit but essential relation to power, especially to what Foucault would name disciplinary and bio-power. As Canguilhem sees it, philosophy, for example, is a normative discipline that demands its practitioners conform to a set of norms, against which their philosophical activity is judged. Discipline, for Canguilhem, is not a

[29] *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969). This quotation is from the English translation by Sheridan Smith (1972), p206.

technique of repression primarily, but a technique that develops the powers of individuals. To become a philosopher, one must submit to the rules of the normative discipline, seeking to respond to actual human problems by identifying the system of values to which they contribute and within which they can be identified. Adhering to such rules or norms is empowering precisely because of the way in which it limits the individual. At the same time, Canguilhem alsoconceives of life as the power of instituting norms, so that, in addition to being a norm-governed activity, living is also the creation of new norms. On the one side, living things depend on their obedience to norms in order to remain alive, even though, primordially, the activity of living is the invention of norms.[30] Canguilhem thus has two ways of conceiving power, as subjection to external norms and as the ability the living thing has to maintain itself in life, according to its own norms.

The 1966 expanded edition of Canguilhem's *Essai* applies this way of thinking to society as a whole, arguing that over the past two to three centuries, a social normativity has developed in which societies seek to organize themselves in both mechanical and organic manners.[31] Social normativity can never be the same as vital normativity, he finds, since society does not form a whole in the same way that an individual living things does. Nevertheless, it can tend towards such a material organization of itself through the invention of new social organs. A state post office, for example, can be organized for the sake of facilitating communication throughout the whole, even though this could easily be re-duplicated, if permitted, by other private organizations.[32] Social norms, therefore, define and pertain to a social power that organizes and structures a polity. While social norms remain dependent upon the vital for Canguilhem, society has

[30] Note the problem involved in conceptualizing creation here, one which Canguilhem explored in relation to aesthetics. There is some record of his interest in this preserved at the CAPHES, although one could also examine his *Connaissance de la vie*. 2nd ed. (1965).
[31] See Chapter 1 of the added material, "*Du Social au Vital*."
[32] The appeal to Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* as a source of illustrations for this new kind of social invention is interesting for the relations it suggests between the development of liberalism and the life sciences.

become increasingly normative and normalizing since the Enlightenment, producing new ways of being and acting.[33] Yet norms are polemical concepts, for Canguilhem, because of their inherent ambivalence as tools that can be deployed in the service of various, conflicting goals.[34] They are relative both to a normative intention and a rule for conduct. While the goal of an organic society is strictly impossible, processes of normalization strive towards such an end.

The increasing social normalization that Canguilhem identifies in the recent history of Europe, provides the conceptual background out of which Foucault develops the idea of bio-power. In his lecture courses at the Collége de France, Foucault, although critical of the notion of normativity when proffered as an assertion about the living itself, takes Canguilhem's work here as a fruitful starting point for the investigation of power relations in modern society.[35] Indeed, by the time Foucault gives his lecture course on *Security, Territory, and Population* (1977-78) the ambivalence of the norm, becomes the basis for distinguishing disciplinary and bio-power. Its two sides are found united in a new object of study, the population, by the methods of statistics. Disciplinary power, Foucault argues, functions by *normation*, that is, beginning with a certain technological apparatus, one attempts to figure out the requirements necessary for the achievement of these ends. Such requirements then become norms to which working habits, for example, can be adapted in order to achieve the necessary ends. While this might involve adjustments in the machinery of production, it also requires the subjection of individual bodies to the shape and rhythm of the machinery. Biopower, by contrast, functions via *normalization*, in which the population is studied as a given in order to determine and divide it into segments of biological normality. Such division of population according to 'natural' norms,

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[33] On this point, one would want to consult Canguilhem's course notes, "Science and Error" (1955-56) as maintained by the CAPHES.
[34] See Chapter 1 of the additions to the *Essai* (1966).
[35] See the first chapters of the lecture courses *Psychiatric Power* (1973-74) and *Abnormal* (1974-75) in particular pages 49-50 of the English translation (2003) of the latter, originally published in 1999 as *Anormaux*.

that is, statistical frequencies, enables the selection or de-selection of population segments for the sake of achieving certain social ends. Disciplinary power operates on the population by seeking to subject defined segments of it to a given regimen, whereas biopower operates in light of the population's own norms and seeks only to manage self-subsistent phenomena. As Foucault put it in Volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, and *Society Must Be Defended*, biopower makes live and lets die.[36]

Foucault certainly develops Bachelard's notion of epistemological rupture and the goal of freeing human thinking from its convictions about the true, but not for the sake of provoking science's progress. Rather, following Canguilhem, he questions the value and meaning of the sciences for thinking in modern times; or, as he puts it, Canguilhem is important in 20th century French thinking because it was he who posed the question of Enlightenment. Having asked after the value and meaning of the sciences, though, he also endeavored to answer by asserting the primacy of the living in all human activities and criticizing the sciences by subjecting them to this, their origin and ultimate source of value. Foucault, wary of a metaphysics of life as creative normativity, develops an archeology that shows its contingent, historical origins. Furthermore, suspicious of the appeal to error as a means to escape the primacy of science and truth, he develops archeology as a counter-science that aims to systematically and empirically show the contours of knowledge's possibility in a given time and place. Rather than organize history according to the overcoming of errors on the way to truth, he seeks to unearth the whole schema of discourse within which various kinds of knowledge emerged. But despite these criticisms of his *bon maître*'s work, Foucault's work remains fundamentally obligated it.

While they would never agree about the status of normativity, one might say that the same normative intention animates their work, namely, the subjection of thought to its conditions of existence in order to provoke its becoming other

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[36] See Part V of *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1 (1976).

than itself, in order to free itself from allegiance to scientific truth. For both, the production of error is conceived as the way forward for thinking; while this produces no stable resting place, in the language of Canguilhem, it does vitalize thinking by provoking its crisis. Foucault, however, develops his mentor's work by abandoning the appeal to normativity, focusing instead on social *normalization* and *normation* as the processes by which power works. Yet, the ground of these notions is found in the ambivalence of the norm first recognized by Canguilhem, that is, in the norms existence as the rule produced by the living individual and the rule by which this individual governs and regulates itself. The vital normativity that Foucault identifies as a contingent historical development, thus stands at the origin of Foucault's own thinking about power, even as he rejects it. But this rejection does not mean that he abandons the task that Canguilhem identified with the notion of normativity. Instead, Foucault's writings, rather than invoking a metaphysics of the living, struggle to empower thinking by uncovering and tracing out the historically contingent norms and rules that inform these, and thereby forcing thinking to err and go beyond itself.

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Chapter 4
Archaeology, Genealogy, Method
(Scott Balasak, McMaster University)

In his book entitled, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Gary Gutting argues that Foucault's oeuvre contains "no methodological or theoretical unity".[1] He continues by stating, "[Foucault's] writings instead fall into several main groups, each characterized by a distinctive problematic and method of approach".[2] This results in "the core of his effort at any point [being] defined by what[s] specific to the problems then engaging him".[3] In other words, Gutting's Foucault is a thinker and writer who has constructed piecemeal discursive objects, which, instead of presenting a coherent body of discourse, are fragmented and discontinuous.

Despite my respect for Gutting's work I nonetheless argue that there is a fundamental misunderstanding with his starting position. In attributing to Foucault a lack of cohesive methodology, he runs the risk of missing the subtle line that runs throughout the entirety of his thinking. That is, if one begins her understanding of Foucault by negating any *cohesive* methodological apparatus within his thought, there is the potential to overlook Foucault's "central themes [which are] power, knowledge, and the body".[4] Unfolding from this, I would argue that Foucault's methodology is manifold and has two main groupings: the

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[1] Gutting, Gary, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 259
[2] Ibid, p. 259
[3] Ibid, p. 259
[4] Dreyfus, Hubert and Rabinow, Paul, Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 106

archeological, and the *genealogical* and three main subcategories or themes: *Power*, *Knowledge* and, the *Body* (*subject*).

When speaking of Foucault does it not actually make more sense to understand him as forwarding several methodologies? Or as Gutting states, "It is fruitful to follow certain themes through some or all of these groups, but the core of his effort at any point is defined by what is specific to the problems then engaging him".[5] It would seem that Gutting in no way rejects the central themes of Foucault's thought, rather, for him, such a construction in no way constitutes a cohesive methodology.

In opposition to Gutting, I intend to demonstrate that there is in fact a cohesive method that Foucault is implementing. Through the joint deployment of *archaeology* and *genealogy*, I will show that Foucault unfolds a cohesive critique of power, knowledge, and the body.

In taking this approach, I will be reading Foucault as a philosopher. That is, as someone who generates concepts. In looking at Foucault as a philosopher, I am performing an experiment and as an experiment, I will clearly need to pass over in silence certain facets of his thought. For example, I will be excluding considerations on the historical accuracy of Foucault's claims. As Dreyfus and Rabinow state, "there is obviously no simple appeal to the facts involved in evaluating Foucault's historical theses".[6] Instead, through reading him as a philosopher, it will be possible to see how Foucault is attempting to construct a method, which is applicable to a myriad of considerations.

This chapter will unfold as follows: first, I will look at what Foucault does with his archaeological concept. In the interest of space, I will take his book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, as an exemplar of the archaeological concept. In doing so, I will be able to look at some of the main components of archaeology. This will lead to my discussing certain aspects of Foucault's concept of *power* as they pertain to the argument being put forth in this essay. Second, I will look at

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[5] *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, p. 259
[6] *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p. 126

what Foucault does with his genealogical concept and, for the same reason as archaeology, I shall take *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* as the exemplar of his genealogical concept. Lastly, I will use Foucault's discussion of the 'expert' and the linguistic connection between *power* and *knowledge*, to further demonstrate the coherence between *archaeology* and *genealogy*.

Archaeology

History

For Foucault there are two main types of historical understanding. On the one hand, there is a historical understanding that sees history as "a single pattern" that is "formed and preserved" through "tracing a line" and drawing "stable structures".[7] In other words, there is a type of history that attempts to create a causal line of historical events – that one event caused another, caused another – and that history unfolds in a linear fashion. Understood this way history becomes the synchronic totalizing of man's rational progression towards greater unitary development. Or as Habermas wrote, "Foucault wants above all to put an end to global historiography that covertly conceives of history as a macro-consciousness".[8] On the other hand, there is a type of history that is not concerned with universally totalizing historical narratives, a history that documents the "disruptions" of history. This historical method sees rupture where another sees progression; it sees history as discontinuous, diachronic, marked with fissures and defined by *epistemological breaks*.

According to Mary Tiles, an epistemological break is best understood as a "break with common sense [amounting to] an *epistemological rupture*".[9] With the rupture necessarily comes a remainder, a left over if you will. The left over the rupture is called an *epistemological obstacle*. An epistemological obstacle is

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[7] Foucault, Michel, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harper: New York, 1972), p. 5

[8] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1996)

[9] Tiles, Mary, Bachelard: Science and Objectivity, (Cambridge University Press: London, 1984), p. 12

defined as the remainder of common sense that has a "tenacious hold on our thought, tending to infect theorizing [and creating] obstacles [that must] be overcome".[10] For example, in our day to day dealings with the world, it would appear to experience that time reveals itself in three main ways: as the past, as the present and as the future. Things like calendars, watches, schedules and appointments aid such experiential givenness of time. This common understanding of time, as somehow constituting a temporal flow, is an epistemological obstacle for physics. "In all the laws of physics that we have found so far there does not seem to be any distinction between the past and the future".[11] Moreover, physicists' believe that "most of the ordinary phenomena in the world, which are produced by atomic motions, are according to laws which can be completely reversed".[12] It should come as little surprise then, that according to Einstein, "the distinction between past, present and, future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion".

For the archeologist, the obstacle to be overcome is a history understood as man's universal and rational progression or as Habermas wrote, for the archaeologist, "history in the singular has to be dissolved".[13] One of the ways that the archaeologist does this is through a rethinking of the document and its relation to history.

Nothing would appear more straightforward than a document, we use and engage with them all the time – birth certificates, social insurance cards, and driver's licenses – only to name a few. Such a quick assessment, however, would miss the way these two types of historical investigation understand documents and how they approach them from very different angles.

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[10] Ibid, 12
[11] Feynman, Richard, "The Distinction of Past and Future", in The World Treasury of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, edit. Timothy Ferris (Little, Brown and Company: New York, 1991), p. 148
[12] Ibid, p. 149
[13] *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

According to Gutting, universal history "and especially the history of ideas – sees documents as clues to the intentional acts (beliefs, thoughts, desires, feelings) of those who produced them. It uses the objective linguistic data of [documents] to reconstruct the inner life of subjects".[14] In other words, this hermeneutical history reduces documents to their subjective *parts*, allowing for the *whole* of historical progress to be understood and re-constructed based on the subjective stances of the person or people at a given time. One potential outcome from such an understanding of the document turns history into the collected biography of the great men that have come before.

The archaeologist will have none of this documental understanding since (s)he attempts to displace "man from his privileged position".[15] That is to say, archaeology attempts to disengage the document from its transcendental foundation. Documents are not to be understood by the archaeologist as the utterance of a fixed and structured subject. Instead, the archaeologist reads the document as an effect of the surrounding discourse of a given epoch. Unfolding from this, documents are understood as a collection, or, what Deleuze calls, a "family"[16] of statements. Therefore, Foucault is not interested in statements insofar as they are concerned with the subjective utterance of a particular person, but instead, with the discursively uttered. In short, Foucault takes statements as statements or "as objects of study in their own right".[17]

Statements as understood by Foucault must be contrasted with how statements are normally understood in grammar and logic. For example, there are rules of formation within grammar and logic as to how it is that statements are used. These rules of formation do not apply directly to archaeological statements. This is not to say that statements cannot be logical or grammatical. Rather, it is to state that they are not reducible to these two different ways of formation. As

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[14] Gutting, Gary, Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason, (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1989), p. 231
[15] *Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, p. 228
[16] Deleuze, Gilles, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, 2006), p. 5
[17] *Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, p. 231

Foucault writes, "I do not think that the necessary and sufficient condition of a statement is the presence of a defined propositional structure, or that one can speak of a statement only when there is a proposition".[18] Statements are much more than the individual utterances of people that have been collected on paper and transmitted through time. Or as Deleuze argues,

> It is not necessary to be someone to produce a statement, and the statement does not refer back to any Cogito or transcendental subject that might render it possible, or to any ego that might pronounce it for the first time, or any Spirit of the Age that could conserve, propagate and recuperate it[19]

Taking a moment to see who and what is being implicated in this quote will prove helpful in understanding Foucault's position with greater clarity. According to Deleuze, Foucault, through the instantiation of the statement, is able to immediately call into question the status of the knowing subject. Both the *I think* of Descartes and the *transcendental subject*, are called into question through the problematization of these positions. Moreover, through the statement, Foucault implicates the *ego* of Freud and Husserl. And lastly, he calls into question the dialectical method of Hegel, which naturally culminates in the "Spirit of the Age".

For Foucault, "the subject is a place or position which varies greatly according to its type and the threshold of the statement, and the 'author' himself is merely one of these possible positions in certain cases".[20] In other words, the transcendental subject, or, the 'author', is a transitive set of variables whose positioning alters from moment to moment and is not a firmly anchored position. For Kant, Hegel and Husserl the transcendental stability of the subject is a necessary condition for both consciousness and knowledge, whereas for Foucault, the 'author' is nothing more than a possible condition among other possible conditions. A given subject is not needed for a statement to be a statement. The conditions of possibility for the utterance of a statement are shifted from the fixed

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[18] *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 80
[19] *Foucault*, p. 4.
[20] Ibid, p. 53.

position of the subject, to the highly transitive conditions of the possible discourse of a given epoch. When statements are collected together they form what is called a *discursive formation*. A discursive formation comes together using four basic principles: *objects*, *enunciative modality*, *concept* and *themes*. For the purposes of this chapter, it will only be necessary to discuss the formation of the principles and objects. For Foucault, [discursive] objects are not just sitting out there in the world: *rather they are formed and shaped by the statements that are made about them*. Also, it must be pointed out, that archaeology is not concerned with the *origin* of the object in question, but rather, with its historical *emergence*. As he writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, archaeology abandons the "question of origin [and instead] must map the first *surfaces* of their *emergence*".[21] As we'll see: this is directly in line with his genealogical concept.

With the enunciative modality, Foucault is attempting to figure out "who is speaking".[22] That is, when a statement is uttered, who is it that states it, and what allows them to make such an assertion? "What is the status of the individuals who – alone – have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?"[23] In the attempt to answer this question, it becomes necessary to focus the attention, not only on the subject making the statement, but the "institutional sites"[24] that "legitimate"[25] the statements uttered. All of this will come into clearer focus below in section 3 (Connections), where I will discuss the role of the expert in legal proceedings. Before moving on though, it is necessary to address a potential confusion given what has just been stated.

Earlier it was mentioned that with the statement, Foucault was investigating something that did not rely on being uttered by a transcendental subject and now it would appear that the enunciative modality is just that: a

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[21] *The Archaeology of Knowledge*
[22] Ibid, p. 50.
[23] Ibid, p. 50.
[24] Ibid, p. 51.
[25] Ibid, p. 51.

transcendental subject that speaks. This would be a misreading of Foucault given he states that he is not founding the enunciative modality on "consciousness".[26] Moreover, he does not "refer the various enunciative modalities to the unity of the subject".[27] Instead, it is not the subject that constitutes the enunciative modality; it is the modality, which "manifest his dispersion".[28] It is the enunciative modality that constitutes the subject, not the other way around.

Given what has been said in regards to the archaeological concept and its relation to genealogy, the question could be asked, "If archaeology and genealogy are so similar to one another, then why the shift to genealogy?" I would argue that this question could be answered in many different ways; one example would be: *archaeology and genealogy are irreducible to one another*. Stemming from this, archaeology on its own lacks a positive understanding of *agon*. As Foucault writes,

> At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an "agonism" – of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.[29]

This of course leads into a discussion of Foucault's concept of power. Given the complexity of Foucault's understanding of power and his long-standing interest in power, it is not possible to address all the contours of his concept. Because of this, I will limit myself to his essay entitled *The Subject and Power*, also, I will only address the issues involved with power as they pertain to the current discussion.

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[26] Ibid, p. 54.
[27] Ibid, p. 54.
[28] Ibid, p. 54.
[29] Foucault, Michel, "The Subject and Power", in Dreyfus, Hubert and Rabinow, Paul, *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 221-222.

Power

According to Foucault, *power is a relation.* It is not an In-itself, a For-itself, a transcendental category or a transcendent form. In this respect, power does not exist in isolation. Rather, "power exists only when put into action".[30] Power creates a myriad of "complex systems with multiple apparatuses"[31] that are "elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation".[32] Given this, power is all-pervasive and a society considered without power only exists for Foucault as an "abstraction".[33]

Foucault contrasts this kind of power, against, what he terms, *sovereign* power. Sovereign power is most commonly understood as a kind of power that functions from the top down. That is, "the whole outrageous functioning of the despicable sovereign"[34] power is thought to be maintained and held by a position of hierarchical superiority over others. The sovereign's ability, to both retain and consciously direct power, is the most common way that people understand power. In other words, power is most often understood as something that someone possesses. Through this possession, they are able to wield and implement this power upon others at will. Whether this power is being implemented by the police, a judge, the king, a parent, or the state, its all sovereign power. This kind of power is understood as a totalizing kind of power.

In order to support Foucault's thesis, that power is all-pervasive and works its way into every facet of life, or, "power applies itself to immediate everyday life",[35] I propose reading the relations of power as a kind of "field ofpossibilities."[36] That is, just like in physics, where there is a Higgs or electromagnetic field, I intend to read Foucault's conception of social power

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[30] Foucault, Michel, "The Subject and Power", in Dreyfus, Hubert and Rabinow, Paul, *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 219
[31] Ibid, p. 223
[32] Ibid, p. 224
[33] Ibid. p. 223
[34] Foucault, Michel, *The Abnormal*, trans. Graham Burchell (Picador: New York, 1999), p. 24
[35] *The Subject and Power*, p. 212
[36] Ibid, p. 223

relations as an immanent field of possible relations of power. The field then would operate as the affective potential of power, and the relations would be the "play"[37] of the "effects" of this possible power relation.

This immanent field of power potential is understood by archaeology in the negative. That is, archaeology is only able to understand the immanent power relations of bodies in the negative as non-discursive effects. In order for Foucault to have a positive conception of power and its relation to the non-discursive, it became necessary for him to introduce something else. That something else for Foucault was found in genealogy.

Genealogy

When looking at *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, I shall consider it of little importance how Foucault interpreted Nietzsche, that is, whether he was correct in his assessment of Nietzsche's ideas. As such, I am going to treat the text as putting forth ideas held by Foucault and not as a commentary on Nietzsche and his genealogy. In doing so I am not denying the importance he had for Foucault or the influence he had on his thought. Rather, doing so clears the space necessary to begin problematizing how archaeology and genealogy relate to one another.

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, "it would be hard to overestimate the importance of the essay for understanding the progression of the work which followed; all the seeds of Foucault's work of the 1970's can be found in this [essay]".[38] Moreover, in the first paragraph, Foucault addresses the relationship of *archaeology* and *genealogy*. There he writes, "Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently *documentary*. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on *documents* that have been scratched over and recopied many times".[39] Already this can be seen as creating a coextensive affair-complex with two statements made in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, where he writes "history

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[37] Ibid, p. 223
[38] Ibid, p. 106
[39] Foucault, Michel, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*, edit. Paul Rabinow (Pantheon: New York, 1984), p. 76

[operates from] *documentary* material"[40] and archaeology is a term that designates "a questioning of the *document*".[41] Furthermore, as we'll come to see, genealogy, in its concern with bodies, does not and cannot, investigate the discursive technologies of the document. Instead, genealogy is interested in the way that bodies have come to be conditioned and controlled by the field of power potentials as a non-discursive effect. In short, genealogy needs archaeology to 'read' the documents that have documented different instantiations of bodies.

Much like archaeology, genealogy is not concerned with a singular and unbroken pattern of progression; it is not "a linear development".[42] Instead, what the genealogist seeks is *not* how all historical events are placed within a Universal Spirit, culminating in a truth that ultimately erases its historical past but rather "the singularity of events".

Singularity and Event

Singularity for the genealogist is an attempt to engage historical problems from a localized position. Singularization for the genealogist is the necessary response to universalization; it is a *break* with the universal. In breaking with the universal, Foucault is rejecting the idea that the particular comes to be a representation of the universal. Instead, Foucault is arguing for the localized singularity of the event as an incorporeal that escapes representation. The event then, is a transversal occurrence, which is not reducible to any given particular, but rather, engages with all of them across the immanent field of power potentials.

The event "occurs as an effect of, and in, material dispersion".[43] That is to say, the event cannot be misunderstood as a quasi-mystical or metaphysical principle. Such a reading would add a dimension to Foucault that he would appear to reject. Instead, the event unfolds across the field of power potentials, which are implemented as effects *of* and *in* matter.

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[40] *The Archaeology Of Knowledge*, p. 6
[41] Ibid, p. 6
[42] *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, p. 76
[43] Foucault, Michel, "The Order of Discourse", in The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. Alan Sheridan, (Harper: New York, 1972), p. 231

According Ladelle McWhorter, the event for Foucault is the attempt tothink "truth as an event".[44] Such thinking is difficult, if not down right "impossible"[45], since the thinking of the event is to think "the unthinkable".[46] It is to try and think beyond the human, beyond the transcendental subject, beyond representation into the outside of any rendition of the Cartesian *Cogito*.

McWhorter argues that in order for this to happen "we must rethink our understanding of what it is to think".[47] In doing so, one is able to begin understanding that "the event is not the causal origin of change, but the specific, discontinuous moment when a transformation is evident".[48] Keith Robinson refers to this 'thought of the outside' as thinking "without image".[49] Foucault describes it as the capacity "to think otherwise".[50]

Origin

In his lecture series entitled *A Pluralistic Universe*, William James states, "I saw that philosophy had been on a false scent ever since the days of Socrates and Plato".[51] With this, it could be argued that Foucault as philosopher is attempting to correct the ills of Plato and Socrates. If so, Foucault's dismantling of the origin can be read as taking a step further to thinking beyond representation, beyond the human and into the plural. *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,* then, is a text that continues his attempts to overturn Platonism and its quest for Truth within the original form of a given particular. In its place, Foucault deploys an immanent critique that aims at the surface of events and not at what is hidden behind their lowly and earthly appearance. In short, the 'epistemological obstacle,' for the genealogist, is the belief in a fixed transcendent truth that is understood via a subject that is transcendentally structured.

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[44] McWhorter, Ladelle, "The Event of Truth", in *Philosophy Today*, (Summer 1994), p. 159
[45] Ibid, p. 160
[46] Ibid, p. 160
[47] Ibid, p. 160
[48] Ibid, p. 160
[49] Robinson, Keith, "Thought of the Outside: The Foucault / Deleuze Conjunction" in *Philosophy Today* (Summer 1999, Volume 43: 1), p. 57
[50] Ibid, p. 66
[51] James, Williams, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1996), p. 291

For the genealogist, this search or quest for the origin behind the simulacra is nothing more than a gigantic error. Platonic Truth is "a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of [origin]".[52] Such an erroneous metaphysical formation deludes one into thinking that objects as they appear in their lowly state are in fact hiding an essential quality, an essence of truth that must be uncovered, and recuperated leading to liberation. After all, "the origin always precedes the Fall".[53] Given this, the genealogist seeks, not Platonic Truth, but rather a surface event that is graspable only through descent.

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault argued that when "one descends to the deepest levels, the rhythms become broader".[54] Then, part of what descending does for the genealogist is to allow for events to be understood no longer as totalizing. Instead, they can be engaged with, in their disparate singularity. This is able to take place given the genealogist retains the archaeological understanding of history as rupture or break. History is the means by which the genealogist is able to bring the search for the origin, down to earth, and turns it into, not a realm of purity, but instead, a point of emergence or beginning.

Emergence/Beginning

Much like the archaeologist, the genealogist looks for the historical emergence or beginning of some event and not its transcendent origin. In other words, neither the archaeologist nor the genealogist will allow for events to be held together and explained using the transcendent form.

For example, asking the question, "Where does madness originate from"? – for the genealogist, is an absurd question. That is, the genealogist is not concerned with the metaphysical form or ideal type of madness, but with madness as it emerges through historical contingency and accident. In such a case,

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[52] *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, p. 79
[53] Ibid, p. 79
[54] *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 3

emergence or beginning is best understood as a multiplicity and not as a particular. What this means is, the emergence of any given discursive or non-discursive formation has many disparate points of beginning or "moments of arising".[55] But such an understanding or replacement of origin with emergence does not mean that emergence is "the final term of a historical development".[56] Instead, emergence is part of descent; it is the part that allows for the genealogist to continue operating within the immanent confines of a history that is not "an uninterrupted continuity"[57] but rather a series of continual emergences through contingency.

The Body

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, "Foucault remains elusive about how malleable the human body really is".[58] In light of this, it is difficult "to tell what position Foucault affirms".[59] For example, Foucault rejects the body as understood by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as being split in two between a lived body and physical body. This has not stopped some commentators from trying to find common ground between these two positions. For example, Todd May[60], using Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *flesh* and Foucault's concept of the *body*, attempts to broker a zone of convergence between these two concepts. Such an approach is doomed to fail, given Foucault's continual rejection of the transcendental subject. It would appear next to impossible to incorporate the transcendental subject of Merleau-Ponty into the thinking of Foucault, without turning Foucault into something unrecognizable.

According to Foucault the body is coextensive with the process of descent. It is because of this descent-body copula that the genealogist is able to understand descent as inscribing "itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the

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[55] *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, p. 83
[56] Ibid, p. 83
[57] Ibid, p. 83
[58] *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p. 111
[59] Ibid, p. 111
[60] May, Todd, "To Change the World, to celebrate life: Merleau-Ponty and Foucault on the body" in, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, (2005; 31), p. 517-531

digestive apparatus".[61] In other words, descent, as an overturning of Platonic Truth, turns its attention away from the 'heavens' and descends down upon the body. The body becomes the place of inscription for "the surface of events"[62] as well as the manifestation of the "stigmata of past experience".[63] The body understood as such becomes the point of conflict for the historical understandings of the past. The past, it would seem, is literally folded within the body as an incorporeal surface event.

Why is it surprising to Dreyfus and Rabinow that Foucault leaves the body in a zone of undecidability regarding how elastic it really is? After all, can we truly ever know all there is to know about the human body and its varied potential for possible connections? It would seem that no matter how much we think we know about the human body, there is always some other connection it can make. Laying claim to a complete or absolute understanding of the body, whether using medicine or the transcendental subject, limits what possible configurations the body can connect to. Limiting the knowledge of the body to the universal in effect limits the potential of the body.

An interesting example of the elastic nature of the human body can be found in recent news coverage: "Thomas Beatie is a 34-year-old Oregon man with a mustache who can bench press 115 kilograms. He is happily married and he is six months pregnant".[64] The statement of a man pregnant clashes with all our common sense understandings of human nature, gender and, sex. As absurd as this may immediately sound, it is in fact true. Thomas Beatie is a transgendered male "who hung onto his female reproductive organs after a 2003 surgery to remove his breasts".[65] This example nicely demonstrates the bodily connections that are available and how complex and elastic they really are. As Lynn Crosbie

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[61] *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, p. 82
[62] Ibid, p. 83
[63] Ibid, p. 83
[64] Crosbie, Lynn, "Could his reception mean a relaxing about gender", in *The Globe and Mail*, Tuesday, April 8, 2008, p. R1
[65] Ibid, R1

writes, "Pregnant man is a big deal, as is the discourse about sex and gender that is being raised around his delicate condition".[66] Such a momentary displacement of our common sense understanding of human nature, sex and gender, allows for the space needed to call into question our bodily knowledge. Or, such a knowledge comes about given "all transgendered people declare, at some point, that they *knew* they were a member of the opposite sex from a very early age and felt trapped in an essentially antagonistic body".[67]

Connections

It is now possible to turn to the third and final section of this chapter. It is here that I will use further textual evidence to demonstrate the cohesion between the archaeological and genealogical. First I will turn to Foucault's lectures from the year 1975, entitled *The Abnormal*. These lectures, which were delivered in the heart of his genealogical 'period', offer an excellent place to see if there is any evidence for the coherency between these two concepts. I will focus my attention on the lecture dated January 8, 1975. This lecture largely deals with the topic of the psychologist as an expert witness in legal proceedings. In looking at how Foucault presents the legal expert, it becomes possible to see how, the *statement*, the *object* and the *enunciative modality*, are still in use, in his genealogical 'period'. Second, I will look at the linguistic coherence between the French words for: *power* and *knowledge*. This is a coherence that is possibly lost, if one only looks at the words in their English translation.

The Expert Witness

According to Foucault, before the implementation of Article 64 into the penal code of France, which states: "there is no crime or offense if the individual was in a state of dementia at the time of his action"[68]; there was no need for the "discourse of experts".[69] With this article, the jury in a court case was now given the "possibility of modulating the application of the law by appealing to

[66] Ibid, R3
[67] Ibid, p. R3
[68] Foucault, Michel, *The Abnormal*, trans. Graham Burchell (Picador: New York, 1999), p. 24
[69] Ibid, p. 33

extenuating circumstances".[70] In short, through the inclusion of a defendant's state of mind and other background information, the jury no longer passed judgment on a subject's guilt or innocence based on the crime committed. Rather, the jury passed judgment on the subject as constructed through a hybridization of medical and legal discourse. The question now becomes, how, according to Foucault, is such a medico-legal discourse implemented?

For Foucault, the expert no longer deals with the subject as a criminal, instead, through the discourse of psychology, the expert is able to 'double' the subject. Or as Foucault states,

> Expert psychiatric opinion allows the offence, as defined by the law, to be doubled with a whole series of other things that are not the offence itself but a series of forms of conduct, of ways of being that are presented in the discourse of the psychiatric expert as the cause, origin, motivation, and starting point of the offence. In fact, in the reality of judicial practice they constitute the substance, the very material to be punished[71]

The question now becomes, "If we go back to the words, what objects does expert psychiatric opinion reveal and attach to the offense as a double?"[72] According to Foucault, the documents present a whole series of different objects created through the discourse of the expert, i.e.: "a poorly structured personality", a "poor grasp of reality", a "profound affective imbalance", and so on.[73] The psychiatric expert through the discursive formation of objects produces such material for punishment.

What is "the status of the subject who presents the evidence?"[74] That is, why should the judge and jury believe this so-called expert? According to Foucault, the status of certain experts is given weight over others simply based on the position in society that they occupy. For example, "the testimony of police officers ... have a kind of privilege vis-à-vis any other report or testimony

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[70] Ibid, p. 9
[71] Ibid, p. 15
[72] Ibid, p. 15
[73] Ibid, p. 15
[74] Ibid, p. 10

because they are statements made by a sworn-in functionary of the police".[75] The status of an expert witness is supported and legitimized by the institutional position that that person holds. So testimony or statements given by a person in a position of state sanctioned authority carry more 'weight' than do ordinary citizens. A very similar logic operates for the psychiatric expert, except their status as expert is supported, not by the sanctioning of the state, but rather, by the "rules for the formation of scientific discourse".[76] That is to say, given the fact that the expert is making statements that are 'supported' by science, their testimony carries with it a 'weight' that other testimony does not. Or, "where judicial institutions and medical knowledge, or scientific knowledge in general, intersect, statements are formulated having the status of true discourses with considerable judicial effects".[77]

With what has been discussed above it can now clearly be seen that the *statement*, the *object* and the *enunciative modality* are still operating in the genealogical 'period' of Foucault's philosophy. In other words, the psychiatrist, is capable of making statements, which construct objects of a medico-legal variety, which are further supported by the fact that they are an enunciative modality operating within the discourse of science. It should come as little surprise then, that because of the expert psychiatric witness, the "magistrates and jurors no longer face a legal subject, but an object: the object of a technology and knowledge of rectification, readaptation, reinsertion, and correction. In short, the function of expert opinion is to double the author of the crime, whether responsible or not, with a delinquent who is the object of a specific technology".[78] Together, scientific discourse and juridical technologies create the delinquent.

Power/Knowledge[79]

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[75] Ibid, p. 10-11
[76] Ibid, p. 11
[77] Ibid, p. 11
[78] Ibid, p. 21
[79] I must thank Andrew Whitehead for discussing this section of my essay with me.

Given the fact that the French words for power and knowledge vary greatly from the English renderings, it is easy to overlook the linguistic connection between these two words. In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of how these two words share a linguistic cohesion, it would be necessary to do a detailed etymological excavation. Such an excavation, although valuable, is not needed for the current discussion. Instead, I will bring to the reader's attention the obvious linguistic cohesion that presents itself on the surface.

The two words that are translated into English from the French are *savoir* for knowledge and *pouvoir* for power. In hyphenating the two words, the linguistic cohesion shows itself immediately: sa-*voir* and pou-*voir*. Both words are –ir verbs, which are constructed using the French word *voir*, which means *to see*. With this simple connection, it becomes clear that both power and knowledge for Foucault are active terms, which designate a state of motion rather than rest. In other words, for Foucault, both power and knowledge are not to be understood as nouns – objects that we can posses – instead, they are active forces, which show themselves through their effects. Using the case of Damien the regicide from *Discipline and Punish* as an example will help to clarify.

With Damien the regicide, insofar as the docile body is affected by power (through public torture), the effective knowledge comes to be generated, so as to reaffirm the potential affective implementations of power. With this, it can now be understood how two different knowledge effects come to be effected through the affects of power. On the one hand, with Damien, we see power generating, through the torture of his docile body, the affectively inscribed knowledge of his guilt. On the other hand, the 'public' is effected to the knowledge that the affective implementations of power to which they bear witness, are in fact, actual (positivities).

Through this dual actualization of the affective inscriptions, both knowledge effects come to reaffirm the affective implementations of discipline

upon the docile body. It would seem then that, just like in Kafka's *The Penal Colony*, power can be seen as inscribing itself literally into the body, which further allows for the knowledge of power to be seen. In this way, it can now be understood how for Foucault, the subject is the effect of power that comes to be known through the visibility of the affective potential of power.

Conclusion

Was I able to demonstrate, by understanding Foucault as a philosopher and placing him within a philosophical discourse and history, that he is in fact putting forth a cohesive method? In order to answer this question with greater clarity, it becomes necessary to recapitulate the points of cohesion that I have unfolded thus far.

First, I have clearly demonstrated that the archaeological and the genealogical concepts both share in the same understanding of history. That is, they both reject a historical understanding based on a totalizing view of history. Instead, they posit an attempt to investigate the immanent emergence of the event through descent. In doing so, they both come to reject the idea of a hidden reality or reality understood as a split between appearance and said reality. Rather, archaeology and genealogy understand events through their surface. Furthermore, this allows both archaeology and genealogy, in their own ways, to shake the foundation of the transcendental subject. On the one hand, archaeology, through a problematization of knowledge, comes to reject the statements of discourse as being founded on the transcendental subject. On the other hand, genealogy, through its problematization of how power comes to be inscribed on the surface of bodies, is able to reject an understanding of the subject as founded on the transcendental. Rather, for the archaeologist, the subject comes to be produced through statements of discourse, while for the genealogist, the subject is produced by power relations. Together they form a cohesive critique of subjectivity. Also, I was able to show how the *statement*, the *object* and the *enunciative modality*, are still at work within Foucault's genealogy by finding evidence of their existence

within the genealogical concept. And lastly, I have demonstrated how, both power and knowledge are linguistically conjoined to one another.

In the end it has clearly been shown that, rather then forming a highly relativistic discourse, as Gutting would have it, Foucault has developed two mutually supportive concepts that, when taken together, form a cohesive method. Foucault would appear to agree with this: "the difference between the archaeological and the genealogical enterprise is not one of object or field, but of point of attack, perspective and delimitation".

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Chapter 5

Foucault, Truth, Genealogy

(Saladdin Ahmed, Ottawa University)

Foucault has mapped a new set of concepts by reintroducing the historicality of our understanding of what is true including "history" itself. Power is defused, truth is a value, knowledge is an essence-less form of violence, and the subject, as a historical entity, is conceivable only with relation to all these historicalities. Genealogy is the field and the approach that enables us to reconnect these concepts and make a philosophical use of them in terms of historical research. In this essay, I will give a concise account of Foucault's genealogy and try to show why and how genealogy occupies such a critical place in Foucault's philosophy.

At the beginning of his lecture, "Truth and Juridical Forms," Foucault says,

> ...social practices may engender domains of knowledge that not only bring new objects, new concepts, and new techniques to light, but also give rise to totally new forms of subjects and objects of knowledge. The subject of knowledge itself has a history; the relation of the subject to the object; or, more clearly, truth has a history.[1]

For Foucault, truth is not a timeless proposition. Rather, truth is manufactured within complex social norms and practices. In other words, know-ledge, as the broad source of truth, cannot be free of ideology. Knowledge is not simply and

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[1] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 2000) 2.

merely an outcome of the Kantian "understanding." Rather, it is a domain that is charged with values and ideological dimensions. Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* explains how certain kinds of knowledge were generated to monitor and, thus, to control human subjects. Those types of knowledge determine what is normal and what is not; who is sane and who is insane.

Domination is exhibited by the established power relations that defines and neutralizes its own worldviews as the right, and the normal. To be dominated is simply to: first, submit to the established state of affairs (the existing reality of power relations) as *the* ultimate reality; second, accept "truth" as ahistorical; and third, to measure one's own world views and individuality by the common outlines of "normality". Foucault's genealogy can be considered as a solid grounding for a fight for emancipation and against domination on the three fronts: reality, truth, and normality. The conflicts of domination are conflicts over knowledge as an authority, which in turn claims reality, truth and normality. Genealogy questions the very legitimacy and neutrality of knowledge. Since knowledge is not natural, there cannot be such as a thing as *the* reality, absolute Truth, or normal. The illegitimacy of a positivist claim of truth is directly linked to the illegitimacy of power, because power is inseparable from knowledge. Power cannot strive for anything but domination, so every truth claim is at the same time a value claim in so far as it corresponds to some power relations. Truth, thus, is always a political proposition as opposed to a logical one. It is naïve to assume that genealogy excludes itself from this flux of forces.

Undoubtedly, genealogy from the very moment of its emergence is also a force that clashes with other waves of force. The question is not epistemological, but it is political. Genealogy is an enduring state of revolt: an immanent method of critique for an immanent rebel. By admitting its absolute relativity, genealogy defines itself as the devil: a God killer. If God is the source of absolute "Truth", from which all the oppressors have acquired "legitimacy" throughout the history of civilizations, genealogy is a God killer. Belief is the only fatal end for any

rebel, so genealogy, as a constant belief refuter, is the only possible principle for constant revolt that guarantees continued rebellion for the rebel. Not surprisingly, genealogy is a path within the hell, the hell of resisting the comfort of absolute truth, of being a believer. However, it is the only worthwhile lifestyle for a rebel who stays faithful to his or her fight against the dwellers and the dreamers of the paradise, who are responsible for the hell that is created within human societies. Genealogy is willfully and consciously evil and that is precisely what makes us noble.

Foucault explains that the subject in the Cartesian-Kantian tradition is the unquestioned source of knowledge. In other words, epistemology considers the subject an immediate entity. For Foucault, the subject in relation to knowledge is not a simple given anymore. Social norms produce subjects and objects of knowledge depending on the power relations. Foucault states, "power and knowledge directly imply each other."[2] As Michael Mahon suggests, power, knowledge, and subject are three axes of genealogy for Foucault. It seems that speaking of any of the three concepts would directly or indirectly refer us to the other two.

Neither truth nor the subject of knowledge is a given for Foucault. The search for the process of the formulation of the subject as a historical product is one of Foucault's major projects. Yet, as mentioned earlier, this question of the subject can be inferred from the question of knowledge and power. The world is not there to be known. In fact, knowledge does violence to its objects. Foucault states, "... there can be no relation of natural continuity between knowledge and the things that knowledge must know. There can only be a relation of violence, domination, power, and force, a relation of violation. Knowledge can only be a violation of the things to be known, and not a perception, a recognition, an identification of or with those things". Knowledge is not an instinct but at a certain historical moment it became a will. Knowledge is "the compromise

[2] Michel Foucault, "The Body of Condemned," *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 170-178. 174.

between the instincts." The relation between knowledge and the objects of knowledge is not harmony or continuity; rather it is a relation of power and violence. "Knowledge is malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind)."[3] This reminds us of Nietzsche's remarks on the contradiction between knowledge and life. Nietzsche says, "Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion (...) true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action..."[4]

Obviously, Foucault's genealogy is a continuation of Nietzsche's project. Foucault frequently describes Nietzsche as the first thinker who draws his attention to the historicality of "truth," which stands right at the heart of Foucault's genealogy. Nietzsche introduced another dimension that gave birth, at least partly, to modern hermeneutics. It is the third dimension: depth. By realizing depth Nietzsche once and forever made the journey of "truth" endless simplybecause there is no bottom under that depth, as Foucault argues. That is to say, there is no an ultimate truth.[5] It seems "ultimate truth" is not something beneath a belief; rather the belief itself is all what there is. Once the belief is weathered, there is no ultimate truth to be held or even to seek for. It seems Nietzsche provides him with the groundwork. Explaining the Nietzschean position Foucault writes, "Nietzsche means that there is not a nature of knowledge, an essence of knowledge, of the universal conditions of knowledge; rather, that knowledge is always the historical and circumstantial result of conditions outside the domain of knowledge."

Probably, this point of view enables one to understand the Nietzschean notion of "death of God". Given that God was also human invention, once modernity attacked this invention on all levels, God died. And when God dies, the modern

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[3] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 76-100. 95.
[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) 60.
[5] Michel Foucault, " Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistmology*, ed. James D. Faubion. Trans. Robert Hurley and others. (New Yor: New Press, 1998) 2: 273.

human had to inter the maze where the paths lead us only to more paths. The violence by which God is "murdered" will lead to an endless chain if "violence". In this sense we were metaphorically living in heaven until we experienced the guilty pleasure when we gained knowledge of knowledge. Until modernity all the references ended at the absolute: namely God, but after we denied that absolute, every reference would refer us only to other references which in turn refer us to other references and so on. Nietzsche denied the first mover, and replaced it with the notion of eternal "becoming". Everything in the world is "self- creating" and "self-destroying", and therefore there is nothing but "will to power". He says,

> ...my Dionysian world of eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will unless a ring feels good will toward itself – do you want a name for this world?.... - *this world is the will to power- and nothing besides*! And you yourself are also this will to power- and nothing besides![6]

In fact, from Nietzsche's claim about invention of knowledge Foucault concludes that God must also be merely an invention. He says, "If the relation between knowledge and known things is arbitrary, if it is a relation of power and violence, the existence of God at the center of the system of knowledge is no longer indispensable."

However, unlike Nietzsche, Foucault focuses on the socio-political conditions and social practices that formulated "types of subjectivity, forms of knowledge, and consequently, relations between man and truth... For example, the juridical and judicial "inquiry" in the middle ages, according to Foucault, gave rise to scientific and philosophical inquiries. Judicial "examination" in the nineteenth century provides the bases for social sciences including psychology, and, more specifically, psychoanalysis. The emergence of "inquiry" and "examination" is strongly connected to the dominant classes' interest in controlling the bodies and the minds of the dominated classes. Eventually, not

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[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trs. Walter Kaufmann and R.J Hollingdale. (New York. Vintage Books: 1967) 550.

only the production of knowledge is determined according to power relations, but also the very standards of sanity and madness. Foucault's archeology in his *Madness and Civilization* is an attempt to show that connection among power relations, production of knowledge and its objects, emergence of a certain subjectivity, and emergence of certain systems of values. Sense, value, desire, truth, morality, and the subject are all historical and, as such, they are situated within the field of genealogical research. They all have moments of emergence, and it is the task of genealogy to determine those moments in their particularity through tracing them back to their descent.

Foucault is fascinated by Nietzsche's view of knowledge as an "invention." He says that Nietzsche used the word "invention" to oppose it to the word "origin" (*Ursprung*). Genealogy is interested in the "- Emergence" (*Entstehung*) as "the moment of arising." Genealogy's hostility to traditional history is mainly because of the metaphysical beliefs that envelop traditional history. Therefore, Foucault and Nietzsche vigorously attack the notion of origin in the sense of "*Ursprung*" that traditional history usually takes for granted. Instead, they are, in their way of writing history, in search of "Emergence" (*Entstehung*)and "Descent" (*Herkunft*). *Ursprung* is associated with the metaphysical beliefs such as origin of things, eternal truths, absolute power/s, universal structures, universal principles, and the final cause. *Ursprung* is the ultimate origin (e.g. God or Platonic forms).

Genealogy is, in a way, "analysis of the descent." Descent is connected to the questions of "body", the "marginalized", the "fragmented", and the "ignored"dimensions of human being. As such, descent is not "uninterrupted continuity." Any attempt to capture the descent of things must consider the conditionality of the historical moment at which the thing emerges. Therefore, genealogy searches for what is spread around on the micro levels. Genealogy in this sense does not have a set of clear targets; rather, it aims at discovering the social practices and conditions that govern a certain historical moment that, in

turn, gives rise to certain types of knowledge. Foucault writes, "the search for descent is not what previously considered immobile; it fragments what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself." Thus, archeology is the method that makes genealogy possible in the first place. Foucault's amazing study of piles of forgotten documents and marginalized figures in marginalized files is a vivid example of the nature of genealogy.

The "Emergence" that Foucault refers to is not located at a certain point; it is more associated with horizons of domination. Genealogy, in a word, is "gray" Genealogy does not seek "meaning" behind the events because it does not suppose that meaning exists behind references; rather, it tries capture the maze of domination that formulates certain kinds of subjection and, thus, certain kinds of knowledge, which in turn determine certain systems of values.

Emergence is what surfaces from the struggle among conflicting forces. It is the disappearance of one kind of domination and the rise of another. Emergence indicates the clash between forces and the violence that would disrupt the balance among forces. Emergence by no means is a finality of events or their directions. As long as there is an endless conflict among forces, there must be an endless possibility of emergences.

At the same time, metaphysicians and traditional historians, who have been taking the metaphysical presuppositions and beliefs for granted throughout history, are interested in the "Origin" of things. Metaphysicians suffer from "origin mania": they are obsessed with the idea of the origin, the essence, or the "lost paradise." Both metaphysicians and traditional historians are motivated by a void nostalgia associated with mythical beginnings. Elaborating Nietzsche's viewpoint, Foucault says, "the origin always precedes the Fall. It comes before the body, before the world and time; it is associated with gods..." Yet for a genealogist, such as Foucault, there is nothing metaphysical, or eternal behind the

things and events. The idea of essence is a fabrication and knowledge itself is an invention.

Metaphysics always suffers from "origin mania," because it believes that, in Nietzsche's words, "things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth." Origin represents the mythological fantasy of the beginning of time, when things were still pure before "the Fall." Origin is, rather, the divine image in which body, world, and time are still absent. However with the moment of Darwin this void nostalgia has been wounded painfully as he tells us that our ancestors were chimpanzees. Nietzsche remarkably emphasizes this Darwinian moment by philosophizing that painful wound. Thus the origin is no longer "associated with gods," but with a hairy body in the ancient woods. Hence, the journey of going back to the beginnings is not so appealing anymore. In fact, once we know we have not lost any treasure in the past and there is no a lost paradise, then we will stop dreaming of the beginnings as the gate to absolute "goodness." However, self-emancipation from the metaphysical infections is by no means an easy task. Nietzsche states, "... even we devotees of knowledge today, we godless ones and anti-metaphysicians, still take *our* fire too from the flame which a faith thousands of years old has kindled: that Christian faith, which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth, that truth is divine..."[8] However, the nineteenth century in general and Nietzsche's moment in particular is very important with respect to the birth of a different awareness that would challenge metaphysics, according to Foucault.[9]

Traditional historians write history under the effect of the metaphysical beliefs that dominate their views. Traditional history is the long shadow of metaphysics. The metaphysical beliefs are spread around; they are built in the linguistic structure and dissolved in the whole discourse that is generated by traditional history. For example, when a historian uses an expression like "the

[8] Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 450.
[9] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2001) 238.

wheel of history," that is a reflection of a metaphysical image that presupposes teleology.

Genealogical history searches for the unspoken of, forgotten, singular, marginalized, and the unthought-of; unlike traditional history that seeks an ideal origin to explain the "essence" of things. A very important marginalized aspect, for a genealogist, would be the body; whereas, the body is disregarded in traditional history in order to "secure the sovereignty of a timeless idea." In fact, the body, for a genealogist, is the record of social practices. It is the territory that has kept the traces of dismissed events. The body represents the record of the fragmental traces of what has happened yet never recorded in the "history." The body has been the subject of all kinds of punishment and discipline.[10] As such, the body is the field of traces that can lead us back to various social practices and the micro levels of power relations. Traditional history, in contrast, focuses on the notions of the absolute such as the soul. In the name of the very idea of the soul the body has been marginalized collectively and destroyed individually. The systematic political domination of body is called "political technology of body" by Foucault. The political technology of body also used the religious denial of the body as an effective strategy to dominate the body. That is why Foucault says, "the soul is the prison of body." Precisely, because of the religious denial and political domination of the body, the body became such an important subject for Foucault's genealogy.

The power relations that tried to erase the earthly signs of the body, in fact, turned the body to an encyclopedia of events. The metaphysicians and their army of moralists teleologized humankind by exiling the human body because the body is temporal and in order to prove teleology, eternal truths, and immortality they had to abolish every temporal figure about humankind. All of the punishments that have been committed against the body to deny it, in fact, changed the body to the black box of history.

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[10] Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies," *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 179- 187. 180.

Traditional history corresponds to our psychological need for a firm belief in the purposefulness of history which would make the present more bearable. However, genealogical history "confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference." Genealogy's task is not about creating meaning for events; rather, its task is to find out the history of meanings, ideas, concepts, notions, and beliefs. For a genealogist nothing stands above or outside history. Moreover, genealogy does not try to humanize the whole history. It refuses to add any human meaning to a course of events that take place as a result of conflicts among forces. Genealogy, unlike traditional history, does not try to comfort us by fabricating the images of human existence we like to see.

Genealogy studies events in their singularity, unlike traditional history that "aims at dissolving the singular even into an ideal continuity." Genealogy studies events in their uniqueness without attempting to rationalize their order or their nature.

Traditional history under the spell of metaphysics depicts history as a rational movement from a specific beginning to a predetermined end. In other words, it supposes that history is a conscious body of events that progressed toward a clear end. For Foucault, the emergence of events is the outcome of clashes and conflicts among countless waves of forces, and genealogy's role is to grasp and record the emergence of events in their singularity.

In order for traditional history to justify its method, it had to presuppose some reference points. For a reference point to function qua a reference point it has to be changeless, i.e., timeless. Thus, traditional history adopts some invariable elements. For instance, it could take the idea of the soul for granted. On the contrary, genealogical history sees history as a history of interpretations behind which there is nothing but interpretations.[11] Yet the emergence of an interpretation matters to genealogy because discovering the emergence gives the

[11] Also see Franco Rella, *The Myth of the Other Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, Bataille*, trans. Nelson Moe (Washington , D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 1994) 63.

genealogist the opportunity to trace back the kind of knowledge, power relations, and subjectivity that is involved.

According to Foucault, Marx's concept of "platitude," Nietzsche's concept of "depth-verticality," and Freud's concept of "unconscious" constitute three profound attacks on the conventional notion of "truth" and "knowledge." Foucault says, "interpretation has at last become an infinite task." Foucault believes interpretation is infinite because there is no such a thing as the "origin." Behind signs there is nothing but other signs. There is no meaning behind signs. Signs arenot tags linked to meanings; rather, there are only signs. In Deleuze's words, "everything is always said in every age is perhaps Foucault's greatest historical principle: behind the curtain there is nothing to see, but it was all the more important each time to describe the curtain..."[12]

Deleuze's remark, "behind the curtain there is nothing to see," describes Foucault's position. Foucault states, "first of all, if interpretation can never be completed, this is quite simply because there is nothing to be interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, for after all everything is already interpretation, each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to interpretation but an interpretation of other signs." Behind an interpretation, there is another interpretation and behind the last interpretations there is nothing but emptiness – madness.[13] Therefore, knowledge is an invention and truth itself is a value.

This is precisely where Foucault joins the Nietzschean project: genealogy. Nietzsche's discovery, that there is no such a thing as "Truth," establishes a massive task for any effective historical research, namely, to trace the descent of truth qua value. Genealogy in this sense is an attempt to write the history of the ideals such as "truth." It is, in Deleuze's words, "both the value of origin and the

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[12] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 54.

[13] In *The Myth of the Other*, Franco Rella published an article, "The Foucault's Apparatus" in which he analyses Foucault's article and elaborates on this point.

origin of values."[14] Foucault asks, "how is it that thought, in so far that it has a relationship with the truth, can also have a history?" Explaining this Nietzschean position, Foucault in his lecture says, "...there is not a nature of knowledge, an essence of knowledge, of the universal conditions of knowledge; rather, that knowledge is always the historical and circumstantial result of conditions outside the domain of knowledge." A genealogist, according to Foucault, finds that there is no "timeless and essential secret" behind things and that "the secret is that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms."

Foucault's genealogy is what makes him a major postmodernist. The most significant postmodernist contribution within Foucault's genealogical scope is his realization of the primary role of social norms and social practices in determining the system of values, including truth and aesthetics. Foucault exercises the art of questioning precisely where "question" is ordinarily ruled out. Foucault's major influence on philosophy might be that philosophy since his moment has become more modest and thorough in ambitions. Postmodernist philosophers do not claima missionary task such as finding the ultimate meanings and essences of the existence. No longer is a philosopher the prophet of truth or the messenger of meaning. Postmodernist philosophy in fact questions the minds that are too obsessed with convictional truths and meanings. In this sense, the new philosophy has become more disturbing for common mentality and its embodiments represented in institutions, i.e., established power relations. In Deleuze's words, "the use of philosophy is to *sadden*. A philosophy that saddens no one and annoys no one, is not a philosophy. It is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity to something shameful." Stupidity amounts to maximization of the scope of convictions and beliefs and minimization of the scope of disagreements between the subject and the collective. In other words, stupidity is a mental strategy that tries to minimize serious concerns and questions. But let us make no mistake: the

[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlison (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 2.

stupid mind is well trained to be concerned on the utilitarian/hedonistic level. The only serious concern of the stupid mentality is utility and any other areas of questions are seen as irrelevant and worthless.

However, even Foucault, and postmodernist philosophy in general, has not been safe from a popular mentality that is obsessed with simplification. Catastrophically, Foucault in the popular understanding is taken as an advocate of an empty kind of nihilism as though by denying metaphysical truth claims Foucault established yet a more dogmatic truth. The popular understanding of Foucault's project of genealogy is nothing but a disastrous reduction of the whole project to superficial slogans that have nothing to do with critical thinking. For example, in some philosophy classes, Foucault's theme of historically of moral values is turned upside down and ridiculously simplified to some slogans that are supposed to be anti-morality, as though Foucault was obsessed with mental and moral laziness.

Mystification for the sake of mystification is another misinterpretation of Foucault and other postmodernists. The common mentality fails to read the sophisticated net of argumentation that is effective in Foucault's texts, so it considers it as a mysterious kind of entertainment. Accordingly, it tries to mirror that false image of Foucault! The common mentality fails to consider the following fact: probably every serious text is relatively difficult, but it does not follow that every difficult text is a serious one. A sophisticated text might puzzle its reader, but if a writer tries to mystify her/his reader for the sake of mystification, that phenomenon is nothing but pseudo-intellectuality. Of course, here I am speaking of some so-called philosophical texts, and not of literature. To take Foucault's writings seriously is to look for the rationality behind and within it. The most obvious thing a scholar can learn from Foucault's project of genealogy is, in fact, the power of precision in the new philosophical writing and the patience in research and analysis.

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Chapter 6

Practices of Freedom: Foucault as Eudaimonist

(Rohit Dalvi, Brock University)

"But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art?"[1]

Michel Foucault

In his book on Foucault, Deleuze remarks, "three centuries ago certain fools were astonished that Spinoza wished to see the liberation of man, even though he did not believe in his liberty or even in his particular existence. Today new fools, or even the same ones reincarnated are astonished because the Foucault who had spoken of the death of man took part in the political struggle"[2] If following John Rajchman we read Foucault's work as a "practical or ethical philosophy of an unfamiliar kind" we should also acknowledge that there is something resoundingly familiar about Foucault's ethics. Those still sceptical about the possibility of a Foucaultian ethics have to be reminded that Foucault as the thinker of the ethical underlies the figure of Foucault as a thinker of the historical and the genealogical, of the political and of dissidence, of archaeology and the history of the systems of thought. Foucault's inquiry into how we become the kind of subjects that we are also opens up the question of what it is possible for us to become. The fictions of the givenness of ethical subjectivity are exposed through an analysis of the organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires and thoughts that gradually and progressively are at work in the material constitution of subjects. Foucault asks us "refuse what you are" and it is in the articulation of

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[1] Michel Foucault *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press) p.261 (henceforth EST)

[2] Gilles Deleuze *Foucault* tr. Sean Hand (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis) 1988 p.90

the critical practices that make this refusal possible and the possibilities this refusal opens up, in terms of subjectivity, is at the heart of Foucault's ethics.

Rather than develop an ethics from the premise of what a subject naturally or essentially is, Foucault's ethics arise from this analysis of constituted subjectivity. With a commitment to this analysis, for Foucault, Kant's famous three questions are as James Bernauer puts it, "denatured" or "historicized"; "What can I know?" is posed as "How have my questions and my knowing been determined? Not "What may I hope for? But "how have my aspirations been defined? And "What ought I to do?" now can be framed as "How do I free myself from myself?"[3] As Foucault describes this historical-philosophical practice it seeks, "to desubjectify the philosophical questions by way of historical contents, to liberate historical contents by examining the effects of power whose truth affects them and from which they supposedly derive."[4]

Freedom, Pleasure, Care of the Self, Creativity and Fearless Speech are the valorized goals of Foucault's reflections on ethics. They can all be encapsulated in that resonant phrase from the Use of Pleasure "to get free of oneself." Foucault's ethics, like Spinoza's, replaces morality and its reference to transcendent values and what is said of Spinoza's Ethics could very well be applied to Foucault that for him ethics replaces the system of judgement called morality. "The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad)."[5] Moralizing discourse arises because of a failure to understand the produced and productive nature of biological and juridical norms. With understanding one can make a transition to the ethical, which for Foucault, as much as for Spinoza, resists a separation from life, instead it is a vigorous commitment to life.

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[3] James Bernauer "Michel Foucault's Ecstatic Thinking" in Final Foucault ed. J Bernauer and D Rasmussen (MIT Press: Cambriidge MA) 1988 pp 46-47

[4] Michel Foucault Politics of Truth ed. Sylvere Lotringer (Semiotext(e): New York 2007) p .56-57 (henceforth PT)

[5] Gilles Deleuze, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy tr. R Hurley (City Lights: San Francisco) 2001 p. 23

The great lesson of the genealogical method is that through a "critical historical ontology of the present " we can free ourselves from ourselves. The critical analysis of thought, which is not limited to theoretical formulations and is understood by Foucault as the form of action, which makes explicit what is embedded in the experiences that certain ways of thinking allow. The operations of truth, falsehood, acceptance or rejection of rules and the relation to oneself and others become explicit through the history of systems of thought and through the "critique" which is its medium. Critique is the means to discard the supposed neutrality of knowledge and bears the "primordial responsibility" of knowing knowledge.[6] The integral task for Foucault's ethics is the analysis of forms of experience and various subject forms in order to reconstitute them as "transformable singularities." This attention to the "transformable" indicates not merely discovering what we are but also refusing what we are. To this end Foucault situated his later work at the intersection of the "archaeology of problematizations and genealogy of practices of the self." Foucault's ethics appeals to the "arts of existence", which through a combination of self-governed rules of conduct and practices, seek to transform an individual life into an oeuvre. Foucault's ethics is not a set of prescriptions and instead is an invitation to a fuller being, to reflect on a new way of conducting one's life, on the use which one makes of pleasure and on the care which one takes of oneself, unrelated to any juridical norm or social control but guided by the demands of moderation. The sole purpose here is to lead a beautiful life and finding in it the ideal of hygiene.[7] The Greek inflection implicit in this concept of a "beautiful life" is *eudaimonia* or flourishing. However, it is important to note that Foucault is no way recommending a return to the Greeks,; his ethics is not a form of nostalgia for antiquity. The Greeks are used, as it were, to help define a new ethics that appeals

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[6] PT, p. 50

[7] Rainer Rochlitz "The Aesthetics of Existence: Post Conventional Morality and the theory of Power in Michel Foucault" in Michel Foucault Philosopher tr. Timothy J Armstrong (New York: Routledge) p. 251

to the "classical culture of the self".[8] What is emblematic about Foucault's ethics is the current of "thinking differently" that runs through his philosophical work, and it is in this critical attempt that one finds what Foucault might mean by flourishing.

Foucault's ethics consist in extracting a relation to oneself from the matrix of relations of power and from the knowledge of the prevailing moral codes and deploying this relation to self in the pursuit of flourishing. The success or failure of his project depends on this "extraction" of a relation to self and hence should be meticulously distinguished from a misreading, like Rorty's in terms of "a private search for autonomy". Foucault's ethical aim is nothing like William Blake's who proclaims "I must create my own system or be enslaved by another man's"; Rorty's conflation of the two seems to be at the root of his misunderstanding and chastisement of Foucault.[9] In the 1980s Foucault was criticized by the likes of Richard Wolin, Terry Eagleton and Christopher Norris as a "narcissist" or a nihilist whose aestheticization of ethics they denounced in the name of a pan-aestheticism which universalizes the partial truths, non-rational norms and self-indulgent sensuousness of the aesthetic sphere. This facile criticism serves to caution us against a hasty misreading of Foucault's ethics. Foucault is not simply speaking of the smug satisfaction of autonomy or of monotonously resisting the workings of power-knowledge but of the more comprehensive uses toward which this freedom is directed.

The problem, for Foucault is how to find a principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. An ethics that is founded on the "so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is and what the unconscious is" would be a step backward, from the freedom opened up by what Foucault calls "the three axes of genealogy." This "principle" however, as we will see, is not extrinsic to the formation of the self or to an a priori subject. In fact the forces and materials

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[8] EST p.271
[9] Richard Rorty "Moral Identity and Private Autonomy" in Essays On Heidegger and Others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1991 p.198

that are named self as distinct from the subject of power-knowledge, is available only in and through the processes of self-formation.

Foucault seeks to use *bios* (life) as the raw material for a work of art. The ethical is the transformation of an individual's life into an artwork; it bears no relation to the juridical or any other disciplinary structure. The ethical task of creating ourselves as a work of art is however, not a deductive exercise beginning with the knowledge of what the self and its desire is and in this Foucault's eudaimonic model will differ strikingly from Aristotle's whose ethic begins with the premise that a human being has the *ergon* i.e. a characteristic function of rational activity. For Foucault ethics is the *rapport a soi*, a relation to the self, which is a radical "de-individuation" of the subject of the power and which in keeping with my earlier allusions to Spinoza, might be described as kind of "self-affection" that enhances one's capacity for action. This is the relation one ought to have with oneself and which will determine how one constitutes oneself as a moral subject of one's own actions.

Unlike Sartre who argues that creative activity is based on the relation one has to oneself, Foucault sees the process of forming this relation to oneself as a kind of creativity. The work of creating one's life as an artwork means, in the first instance, working on the relation one has with oneself. This is a voluntary action and cannot be reduced to trying to fit into a given a mould or pattern established by moral precepts or norms. The norms for self-making are internal to the aspects of what Foucault calls the relation to the self. The "self-formation" that Foucault speaks of is not self-awareness and neither is it some privileged access to interiority. Self-formation is articulated in the four aspects Foucault delineates in the relation to the self.

This relation to the self is negotiated in trying to understand what aspect of oneself "is concerned with moral conduct." This aspect of the relation to the self, Foucault calls "ethical substance", a term that has a shifting locus; it is, through, the relation to self that one constitutes oneself as a moral subject of one's own

actions. The notion of ethical substance is historically contingent and can cover feelings, intentions, desires, acts. As Foucault interprets Greek ethics, the ethical substance is the action that translates desires and seeks and results in pleasure. For Augustine and the Christian tradition, desires became the ethical substance, for Kant it is intention, for Marx its class-character. The ethical substance whether intentions, motives or desires is what one attends to in constituting oneself as an ethical subject. It is in terms of the ethical substance that we articulate an ethical stance and engage in self-forming activity.

The next aspect of the relation to the self, Foucault isolates is the mode of "subjectivation" through which one recognizes moral obligations. One can recognize one's moral obligations through divine or juridical commands or by appealing to a universal logos. Foucault echoes the aesthetic demands for fine actions, actions that are *kalos*, that one finds in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in deciding in favour of recognizing moral obligations in the attempt to give one's existence the finest, most beautiful form possible. This is not the beauty of the narrowly aesthetic but is what the Greeks, especially Aristotle oppose to *aischros*, that which is ugly and shameful. The "beautiful" existence elicits admiration whereas the "ugly" existence brings disgrace. Condemning Foucault for the aestheticization of ethics is to turn a blind eye to the Greek concepts that are informing his later work. These concepts do not neatly separate the aesthetic from the ethical in the manner of Wolin and Eagleton. These modes of subjectivation that constitute moral subjects who recognize their obligations provide models for establishing relations with the self in terms of "self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object."[10] A morality based on a code enforces moral subjectivation through the authority it wields. The threat of punishment implicit in the code ensures that the code is learned and observed. Foucault describes this process as follows: "The subjectivation occurs

[10] Michel Foucault The History of Sexuality Vol 2: Use of Pleasure tr. R Hurley (Vintage: New York), 1990 p.29

in a quasi-juridical form, where the ethical subject refers his conduct to a law or set of laws, to which he must submit at the risk of committing offences that make him liable to punishment." [11]

This is the juridification and codification of moral experience often associated with the legalistic interpretation of religious morality. Foucault himself defends the move beyond the moral philosophy that issues a set of prescriptions toward an ethics, although he does admit that the moral codes and self-formation as two modalities of the moral are rarely dissociated in history. The aim is to render the moral codes relatively unimportant when compared with the processes the individual undergoes in becoming an ethical subject. The history of moral experience is a history of conflict, compromise and juxtaposition between "code-morality" and ethics. The distinction between the control of desires as the enjoined by a moral code and as an aspect of the transformation of oneself as a desiring being is stark. It is not simply a case of ethics and morality offering different interpretations of the same precepts. To become austere one transforms oneself as a desiring being and in this transformation modifies the objects and the intensity of one's desires. This properly belongs to ethical experience and is distinct from the austerity resulting from moral conformity to a code.

The third aspect of the relation to the self is work carried out on the ethical substance, what Foucault calls *pratique de soi* or "self-forming activity", that is to say, ethical work on oneself undertaken in order to become an ethical subject. In the case of the cultivation of sexual austerity, either we eradicate our desires or purify our intentions in order to passively comply with a rule, which may involve strenuous effort at memorization and assimilation of a set of precepts, or to actively and painstakingly seek to map the "movements of one's desires in all its hidden forms" in order to transform our relation to our desires. Ethical subjectivity lies in this active engagement.

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[11] Ibid.

The fourth aspect of the relation to the self is teleological, in that it consists of a determination of the kind of being we want to be as moral agents. We act with the aspiration of becoming through those actions pure, free, immortal, god-like or masters of ourselves. Rather than the strict adherence to the demands of the laws or a moral code, the ethical pertains what causes one to follow the laws. The telos that Foucault includes as an aspect of the relation to the self prevents ethical actions from floundering in isolated irrelevance; it places ethical actions in a broader pattern of conduct, as Foucault puts it "a moral action tends toward its own accomplishment; but it also aims beyond the latter, to the establishing of a moral conduct that commits an individual ... to a certain mode of being."[12] In this aspect of the relation to self, Foucault's eudaimonism becomes explicit. Ethics is instrumental in that it leads to a beautiful existence; an existence in which one flourishes and experiences an enhanced capacity to act.

Judith Butler speaks of a "lexicon of virtue" in Foucault and locates the practices associated with the critical inheritance Foucault gains from Kant as a "virtue."[13] Since Foucault understands ethics as the "conscious practice of freedom" would it be accurate to locate freedom in this lexicon of virtue? Not quite. Freedom is an ontological precondition for ethics and ethics is the reflective form of that freedom; it is what one does with that freedom.[14] If one were to develop a lexicon of virtue in Foucault we would have to focus on what this freedom achieves in ethical action and the visible mode of being; the ethos which displayed itself in, among other things, appearance, gait, clothing, speech and which, if fine, become the object of moral and aesthetic appreciation. Foucault emphasizes "practices of freedom over processes of liberation" because it is the former which allow us not simply to act under given terms but to redefine those terms. The liberation of sexuality involves overcoming constraints whereas the

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[12] Ibid. p.28
[13] Judith Butler , "What is Critique?" in Judith Butler Reader ed. Sara Salih with Judith Butler (Blackwell: Oxford)2004 p. 310
[14] EST 284

practices of freedom with regard to sexuality would seek to define the very notions of sexual pleasure and erotic relations to others.

This ethos of the practices of freedom, Foucault relates to a "care of the self". This notion of "the care of the self" is central to developing an ethos that is beautiful and thus central to Foucault's version of eudaimonia. It implies, on Foucault's view, a limitation and control of power, preventing in effect an abuse of power and thus establishing a relation to others that enables life in the community. The operative assumption here is that one who is able to take proper care of oneself is also thereby able to take care of others because this care has enabled one to overcome all that would propel one in the direction of selfishness in everyday life and tyranny in the political sphere. Foucault argues that the care of the other cannot take precedence over the care of the self, since the relation to the self has an "ontological priority" and it is from this relation that the relation to other is derived. Failing to take care of the self, that is to say, a failure to establish a relation to oneself that prevents from being enslaved by one's desires results in domination and the exercise of tyrannical power.

The care of the self allows one to understand one's place in a household or in the polis thereby clarifying one's duties and responsibilities and allowing for their discovery in the relation to the self. One who takes care of the self develops an admirable ethos and is able to maintain, to use Foucault's words "a proper relationship" to others.[15] The propriety that one speaks of here is not that which conforms to a code, to the *nomoi* of the polis, it is Foucault will argue, an ethical propriety, one which is in accord with the spirit of the ethos of self-transformation.

In Foucault's own discourse, admittedly only "critique" is accepted as a virtue. Virtues like bravery, generosity, temperance which one encounters at their richest in Aristotle are displaced by the Socratic-Platonic "care of the self". Foucault reads enkrateia, self-mastery as the dominant means of relating to one's

[15] EST 269

appetites. Rather than consider a state of character that allows one to control, qualitatively and quantitatively, one's appetites and the responses they provoke, Foucault in his interpretation of Greek ethics sees the notion of virtue as a relationship of domination and control over one's appetites and thereby over oneself. The relation to the self is then expressed in terms of mastery and docility, command and obedience. This adversarial and combative relation to the self, a struggle, requires both *mathesis* and *askesis*, knowledge and training.

But what after all is the care of the self, if not virtue-seeking? Virtues are not derived from a transcendent source, neither are they codified and indelibly impressed with the stigma of the productions of power-knowledge. They do not constitute a norm that is derived from actions that have social approval, although in some instances Aristotelian virtues seems to suggest this. Virtues are not simply the excellent qualities of the subject of law. Are they not the culmination of a use of freedom and a practice of self-formation?

The internalisation of virtues, as states of character is the relation to the self that is the centre of Foucaultian ethics. The internalisation of virtues, becoming virtuous, is in fact the radical de-individuation or "de-subjugation" that is Foucault's primary concern. Virtue-seeking is the process of freeing ourselves from ourselves. The "ethical substance" in the care of the self as virtue-seeking, addresses is the dispositional make-up from which appetites, intentions, feelings arise. It is a mode of subjectivation in which moral obligations are disclosed through the aesthetic-moral impetus of the "fine". Subject-formation becomes a matter of attempting to articulate the "fine" in how appetites, emotions, motives are experienced and expressed. Ethical obligations are derived from what is "fine" in any situation. The work required on the ethical substance, that one performs on oneself enables ethical subjectivity which after all is what is central to the cultivation of a virtue. The mode of being which is the *telos* of ethical actions is the type of conduct that is eudaimonic, which if we recall Aristotle is not a "state" but an "activity"; for Foucault then to flourish is to engage in fine actions that are

properly ethical. An aesthetic existence, the transformation of *bios* into a work of art is evident in this eudaimonic activity.

Foucault's emphasis on self-mastery leads one to wonder if one were to relate to the self merely in terms of self-mastery, it is hard to imagine that an ethical relation to others could emerge from this maze of domination and control. How precisely does the relation to the self make one reticent to exercise oppressive power? The struggle of the mastery over one's desires could consume one entirely. Then how will the shift to the other regarding attitudes and behaviour emerge?

Justice, understood not as the virtue of juridical institutions of which Foucault is rightly suspicious, but as an individual virtue allows for a relation to others that is not filtered through a prior exercise of self-mastery. Although *enkrateia* is not alien to the project of virtue-seeking, justice as the "complete exercise of complete virtue" allows for a relation to the other that is not merely consequent to one's relation to oneself. Without challenging the "ontological priority" that Foucault ascribes to the relation to oneself, justice as a state of character would integrate ethical action in a pattern of conduct that is consistently and pervasively other regarding. The practices of freedom then seamlessly become practices of justice. The relation to oneself, the almost singular point of resistance to the codes and powers is not captured in a body of moral knowledge. For Aristotle and for Foucault, the merely theoretical assimilation of the relation to the self is futile; this relation is significant in how it is worked out, lived in the vital medium of *bios*.

Foucault's ethics is by his own admission not a revival of Greek ethics, which at any rate would be futile. The relation to the self is a domain of unceasing creation, in the face of recuperation by power-relations and relations of knowledge, the relation to the self is recreated and "continually reborn, elsewhere and otherwise." As opposed to the passions of power-knowledge that diminish our powers of acting or separate us from them, the relation to the self, the ethical

relation enhances our powers of action. It is towards this enhancement, towards the creation of one's life as a work of art that Foucault's eudaimonism is directed.

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Chapter 7

Foucault and His Use of the Ancients

(Annie Larivée, Carleton University)

The goal of my current research is the development of an ethics of the care of the self which is in keeping with contemporary cultural, social, and political reality.[1] As the first contemporary thinker who strongly advocated a reappropriation – both ethical and political – of the ancient notion of *epimeleia heautou*, Foucault is an interlocutor who cannot be ignored. Thus, I would say that the question which guides this article is not only that of Foucault's use of the Ancients, but also the question of the possible use that we can ourselves make of Foucault's use of the ancient concept of care of the self. My text will consist of three parts. First, I will examine the delicate question of knowing if, how, and to what extent Foucault makes use of the Ancients. Can we properly speak of a reappropriation of the ancient ethics or is Foucault's use of the past essentially a *critical* one? Thus, the first question I examine, a methodological one, relates to the fundamental issue of the nature of Foucault's relationship to Antiquity in particular, and to history in general. The second part of my paper will throw light upon Foucault's particular use of the ancient concept of care of the self (or the use he was intending, since he was, in a way, stopped while still in full stride). Thus, I will contrast his enthusiasm for this ethico-political concept with the mistrust, or even hostility, which he elicited and still elicits from various contemporary

[1] This text was presented in September 2007 at the "Usage des Anciens" colloquium held at UQAM, at the "Antiquité et temps présent" colloquium organized by the Franco-Russian Center in Moscow, as well as at the First Foucault Circle of Canada Conference that took place at Brock University in March 2008. I want to thank the participants at these events for their questions and comments. The original version of this text will appear in French with PUL in 2009 and this English translation was backed by Alain El Hofi to whom I express all my gratitude.

thinkers who are opposed to what could be called the "contemporary culture of care of the self."[2] As a conclusion, I will very briefly evoke various interviews where Foucault discussed his views on the issue of friendship as a way of life (drawing inspiration from the ancient notion *philia*) in order to show how an ethics of care of the self implies, contrary to our possible apprehensions, neither egoism nor the rejection of politics.

1 – Foucault and his critical use of the Ancients

Since the publication of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, his *Collège de France* lectures devoted to the ancient care of the self, many interpreters qualified Foucault as a "spiritual thinker" or spoke of his "return to the ancients," or even of his "conversion".[3] What should we make of this? Should Foucault be placed alongside those contemporary thinkers who, somewhat nostalgically, champion a return to the ancient ethics? The answer is not simple. I would say: "yes and no." Let's begin with the "no".

First, one thing is certain: Foucault himself vigorously resisted such an interpretation of his texts. He displays neither admiration nor nostalgia for the Ancients. In the interview called "The ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of freedom," Foucault states:

> Nothing is more foreign to me than the idea that, at a certain moment, philosophy went astray and forgot something, that somewhere in its history there is a principle, a foundation that must be rediscovered. ... Which does not mean that contact with such and such a philosopher may not produce something, but it must be emphasized that it would be something new.[4]

In fact, in "Le retour de la morale" ("The comeback of morality"), an interview published three days after his death, Foucault specifies that "Antiquity has been,

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[2] Here, in particular, I have Alain Renaut in mind, who we will discuss in what follows.

[3] See my paper, "Un tournant dans l'histoire de la vérité? Le souci de soi antique," p. 335. Complete references to the works mentioned can be found in the bibliography.

[4] "The ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of freedom," in *The Essential Foucault* (=*EF*), p. 37.

in [his] view, a deep error."[5] And in the interview entitled "On the genealogy of ethics," he goes so far as to declare that the hierarchy and dissymmetry on which the Greek ethics of self-mastery is founded seems to him to be something which is "quite disgusting"![6] Foucault's view of Antiquity is clearly not a tender one: contrary to many other philosophers, he is far from construing it as a lost paradise, an ever-flowing source from which we should enrich ourselves.

And yet, what about the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, his *Collège de France* lectures devoted to the ancient care of the self? If some see it as an attempt to rehabilitate the ancient ethico-political concept of care of the self, it is apparently because they fail to recognize the general project to which these analyses of Ancient philosophy are subordinated. When reading Foucault's analyses of Plato, of the Epicureans, or of the Stoics, we should bear in mind that these studies share the same general objective as his works on the topics of the history of madness or on the history of the penal system, for example. That is, their principal purpose is *genealogical* and *critical*, the genealogical method and the critical purpose going hand in hand. To properly understand the way in which Foucault "uses" the Ancients, let us briefly specify the meanings of these two terms. To do so I will here base myself primarily on three programmatic texts in which Foucault clearly explains the use he intended to make of history, namely: 1) "Nietzsche, genealogy, history" (1971); 2) "What is Enlightenment?" (1984); 3) The preface to the second volume of his *History of Sexuality* (1984).

The first characteristic of Foucault's enterprise, which, following Nietzsche, he qualifies as *genealogical*, is that it is firmly rooted in the present. In 1984, a journalist inquired about the reasons which motivated him to extend the reach of his history of sexuality project all the way back to Greek Antiquity. To this Foucault responded: "I start with a problem as it is posed in the present and I try to make its genealogy. Genealogy means that my analysis is grounded in a

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[5] My translation, "...toute l'Antiquité me paraît avoir été une profonde erreur" (*Dits et Écrits* II (=*DE*), p. 1517).

[6] My translation, "...tout cela est franchement répugnant" (*DE* II, p. 1207; see *EF*, p. 106).

current question."[7] This attention to the present which, according to Foucault, characterizes modernity as an *attitude*, as an *êthos*, as a *mode of being*, is at the heart of his genealogical practice as he explains in "What is Enlightenment?"[8] I will return shortly to the issue of knowing which current question motivated Foucault's research on the ancient care of the self. For now, it will do simply to note that the first characteristic of genealogical investigation is its rootedness in *current* questioning.

Second main characteristic clearly brought to light in "Nietzsche, genealogy, history": genealogy distinguishes itself from traditional history, for it carefully avoids postulating the existence of historical invariants whose unity and cohesion are preserved throughout time. Rather, its goal is in fact to dissolve such an illusion. Let us take the example of sexuality (or rather of "sexuality"). The genealogical investigation which Foucault dedicated to this theme does not postulate that sexuality would be a natural and universal phenomenon undergoing merely superficial variations which depend on the cultural context within which it manifests itself. His genealogical study aims rather to make sexuality appear as a thouroughly historical phenomenon, as a complex "mechanism" having only emerged in the last two centuries in relation to what he calls the *scientia sexualis* which designates the set of medical, therapeutic, institutional, discursive practices having given shape to what we now experience, in the West, as "sexuality". Thus, the Ancients, according to Foucault, did not know sexuality in the strict sense, their experience of pleasures, of the *aphrodisia*, being organized differently. The same applies to Oriental cultures where an "*ars erotica*" prevails.[9] Thus, both *The History of Sexuality*, and *The History of Madness*, bring us to understand that there is no such thing as "sexuality" or "madness". Genealogy "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows

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[7] My translation, "Je pars d'un problème dans les termes où il se pose actuellement et j'essaie d'en faire la généalogie. Généalogie veut dire que je mène l'analyse à partir d'une question présente" ("Le souci de la vérité," in *DE* II, p. 1493).
[8] *EF*, p. 51.
[9] *History of sexuality* vol. I (=*HS*), pp. 57-58.

the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself."[10] As a result, it introduces "discontinuity into our very being."[11]

Consequently, the third principal characteristic of the genealogical history practiced by Foucault is its corrosive or "critical" quality. The illusion of the phenomena's continuity and coherence finds itself dissolved and the genealogy thus opens the possibility of a change. The main virtue of historical knowledge, Foucault explains following Nietzsche, is not to establish a link with the past as "origin", nor even to *understand* how we have become what we are, but rather to "cut".[12] In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, Foucault continues, critique seeks to show "what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints. The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible 'crossing-over' ("*franchissement possible*")." In fact, this critique is genealogical

> ... in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.[13]

Foucault summarizes by declaring: "I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings."[14] In other words, by bringing to light the *contingency* of

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[10] "Nietzsche, genealogy, history" (=*NGH*), in *Foucault Reader*, p. 82.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 88.
[12] "History becomes 'effective' to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. 'Effective' history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting," *NGH* (*FR*), p. 88.
[13] *Ibid*, pp. 53-54.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 54.

our current mode of being, Foucault's historical studies open the way to a transformation of self which is as individual as it is social.

Let us now return to the main subject, that of Foucault's relation to the Ancients. Does this *critical* and *transformative* objective also rightly apply to Foucault's studies of the Ancients? It seems to me that it does. Fuelled by the desire to bring to light the various modes of relation to self which succeeded one another throughout our history, these analyses –in the same vein as the work on madness or on the penal system– are genealogical and must be interpreted as such.[16] In fact, the programmatic introduction to the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* in which Foucault specifies that the objective of his inquiry into the Ancients was for us to "to get free of ourselves" should suffice to attest to this.[17] However, let's be more precise. In light of these preliminary remarks, we are faced with the following question: from which aspect of our current "self" did Foucault's genealogical inquiry into ancient ethics, seek to free us? Which transformation did it seek to render possible? In other words, from which present situation did Foucault visit and revisit the Ancients in his genealogical investigations of sexuality, ancient ethics, and more particularly, care of the self?

This question would call for further explanation. I will limit myself to saying that apparently for Foucault it was to retrace the formation of the contemporary mode of relation to oneself, which, in his view, consists of the will to decipher one's self on the basis of a "hermeneutic of desire."[18] Indeed, as Foucault suggested in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* –which subtly brought out the relation between the way that the subject relates to herself in the modern experience of "sexuality", and the Christian practice of confession– our privileged way of relating to ourselves today takes the form of a search for our real self founded on a task of self-interpretation. It's up to the individual to

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[16] Even though they are obviously interesting in themselves and could also be read independently of this thesis.

[17] *HS* I, p. 8. In French: "se déprendre de soi-même" (*Histoire de la sexualité* II, p. 17).

[18] See *UP*, pp. 4-5. "Whenever it is a question of knowing who we are, it is this logic [that of a logic of concupiscence and desire] that serves as our master key" (*HS* I, p. 78).

decipher her true nature, to grasp her real identity, to find her real self through introspection and self-analysis. This hermeneutic tendency, previously denounced by Susan Sontag in her famous essay *Against Interpretation* published in 1964, is clearly at work in modern psychoanalysis –which was still triumphant, particularly in France, at the time he undertook his *History of Sexuality*– and would, in fact, be the heir to the Christian practice of confession.[19] Indeed, according to the explanations provided in the *Hermeneutics of the Subject,* the historical genesis of this contemporary mode of self-relation began with the platonic ideal of self knowledge and lead to modern psychoanalysis, by way of the Christian practice of confession. "What could be more spontaneous, or more natural and less culturally mediated," we have a tendency to think, "than the relation one entertains towards one's self?" By the retracing of this historical genesis it may be shown –at least it was Foucault's hope– that this type of relation to oneself is a contingent historical formation and that, in virtue of this fact, it is possible to modify it.[20]

But why should Foucault mistrust a mode of self-relation governed by self-knowledge? Why is he distrustful of the old Delphic invitation, "know thyself," *gnôthi seauton*? As witnessed by the following passage taken from "The subject and power," the problem with this mode of self-relation, in Foucault's view, is that it is interdependent with a form of identity-based violence.

> This form of power that applies to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-

[19] See *HS* I, p. 58 *sq*, pp. 65, 68-70, 129 and 159 where Foucault explicitly places Freud alongside the "greatest spiritual fathers and directors of the classical period."

[20] In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (*HOS*), Foucault suggests that three modes of relation to self succeeded throughout our history: the mode of knowledge of self (with Plato), of care of the self (in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy), and of self-exegesis (in Christian asceticism). See *HOS*, p. 258.

> knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to.[21]

Far from being a practice of liberty, we see how the contemporary hermeneutics of self thus turns out to be a manifestation of (disciplinary) power veiled in one of its most subtle forms. And it is this contemporary hermeneutics of the self which is manifested in a frenetic quest for identity on the individual and collective levels (the quest for the "true" self, the "authentic" self). "For a long time, the individual was vouched for by the reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself. The truth confession was inscribed at the hearth of the procedures of individualization by power," Foucault further explains in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*.[22] Thus, we see how Foucault's work on Antiquity is rooted in the *present* and contributes to the project of "a critical ontology of ourselves," as he puts it in "What is Enlightenment?" More precisely, a "critical ontology of ourselves as historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings."[23]

This being said, if the study of Greco-Roman Antiquity has the advantage of opening up the present to the possibility of another mode of relation to oneself, it is because it also offers a positive alternative. At the start of this paper, I suggested that the question of whether or not Foucault's works on Greco-Roman Antiquity constitute an attempt at reappropriating ancient thought should be answered in the negative as well as in the positive. Bringing to light the critical

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[21] *EF*, p. 130. "Cette forme de pouvoir s'exerce sur la vie quotidienne immédiate, qui classe les individus en catégories, les désigne par leur individualité propre, les attache à leur identité, leur impose une loi de vérité qu'il leur faut reconnaître et que les autres doivent reconnaître en eux. C'est une forme de pouvoir qui transforme les individus en sujets. Il y a deux sens au mot 'sujet': sujet soumis à l'autre par le contrôle et la dépendance, et sujet attaché à sa propre identité par la conscience ou la connaissance de soi. Dans les deux cas, ce mot suggère une forme de pouvoir qui subjugue et assujettit" (*DE* I, p. 1046).

[22] *HS* I, pp. 58-59.

[23] *EF*, p. 54.

purpose of genealogical investigation served to illustrate the negative pole of the answer. It is now time to specify in which sense the answer is also positive.

2 – The positive consideration of the care of the self by Foucault

In addition to *parrhêsia* –freedom of speech, the audacity of speaking truthfully[24]– one theme of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy elicited a strong enthusiasm in the final Foucault: namely, the care of the self and the practices (or techniques) of the self which are associated to it. The ancient practices of the self, or arts of life, flourished in Stoicism and Epicureanism and are well known through the work of Pierre Hadot.[25] I will not dwell on them here. I will rather focus on the *use* that Foucault intended for them.

The theme of care of the self aroused Foucault's interest because it is an interesting alternative to the contemporary mode of relation to the self based on hermeneutics and the search for intrinsic identity. Let's refer to the ancient care of the self as found in the Epicurean or Stoic school of thought. It shows that it is possible to have a relation with oneself based on the idea of self-shaping or self-transformation, rather than on the idea of knowing oneself. "Know thyself," a dominant dictate of our culture, can give way to questions such as:

> What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one 'govern oneself' by performing actions in which one is oneself the objective of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts.[26]

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[24] This is the theme of the last, as of yet unpublished, course that Foucault taught at the Collège de France entitled "The courage of truth" ("Le courage de la vérité"). We can nevertheless refer ourselves to the course he gave at Berkeley in the fall of 1983 on the same subject whose transcription has been published under the title *Fearless speech*. Also see the writings of **F. Gros**, "La *parrhêsia* chez Foucault (1982-1984)" and of T. Flynn, "Foucault as parrhesiast: his last course at the Collège de France."

[25] See *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, and *What is ancient philosophy?*

[26] "Subjectivity and Truth," in *Ethics, subjectivity and truth* (=*EST*), p. 87; "que faire de soi-même ? quel travail opérer sur soi ? Comment 'se gouverner' en exerçant des actions où on est soi-même l'objectif de ces actions, le domaine où elles s'appliquent, l'instrument auquel elles sont recours, et le sujet qui agit?" ("Subjectivité et vérité," in *DE* II, p. 1032).

Thus, for Foucault, this ancient model of the care of the self would be a way to break free from the mode of relation to the self where knowing one's self and the search for identity are tantamount to normative subjugation, *asujettissement*. It opens, so to speak, a path of resistance against the process of normalization which individualizes by "identifying" and by inviting each person to identify themselves. In a concern-based, care-based relation to the self, the question is no longer to discover one's self, to explore one's true nature, one's intrinsic self, but rather to shape one's self through various practices. It is evident that Foucault was quite enthusiastic about the discovery of such "techniques of the self." But, did this enthusiasm lead him to consider a simple return to these ancient practices of the self? Certainly not. The teleological horizon and the anthropological framework which in the past supported those practices have become alien to our contemporary culture and it would without a doubt be pointless to seek to reactivate them.[27] Having said this, it is reasonable to hope that the rediscovery of the ancient care of the self can "produce something new," to borrow an expression I cited earlier. So, if Foucault did not advocate turning back to the ancient care of the self, he did however wish for an ethics of the self which is in keeping with the contemporary world, as indicated by the following extract from the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*:

> ... when today we see the meaning, or rather the almost total absence of meaning, given to some nonetheless very familiar expressions which continue to permeate our discourse –like getting back to oneself, freeing oneself, being oneself, being authentic, etcetera– when we see the absence of meaning and thought in all of these expression we employ today, then I do not think we have anything to be proud of in our current efforts to reconstitute an ethic of the self. And in this series of undertakings to reconstitute an ethic of the self, in this series of more or less blocked and ossified efforts, and in the movement we now make to refer ourselves constantly to this ethics of the self without ever giving it any content, I think

[27] This opinion is not shared by all. Pierre Hadot, for example, seems to believe that it is still possible, today, to practice these ancient spiritual exercises, even though he specifies that it is not a matter of "mechanically imitating stereotyped schemas" (*Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, p.72).

> we may have to suspect that we find it impossible today to constitute an ethic of the self, even though it may be an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task, if it is true after all that there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself.[28]

To conclude, I would like to comment on some aspects of this very fruitful passage where Foucault clearly states the urgent necessity, in his view, of reconstructing an "ethics of the self."

3 – Care of the self, friendship, and relational creativity

First, consider the statement that the source of all resistance to political power rests on a certain relation of one's self towards one's self. This comment makes it clear that Foucault's work on the ancient ethics of care of the self does not depend on the abandonment of the political aspect of his thought, contrary to what is often written. To this effect, many writers posit the existence of two Foucaults: the first Foucault, both political and subversive, and the "final" Foucault, the ethical Foucault who abandoned the study of power. This reading does not hold water in light of the fact that, as indicated by the passage just cited, Foucault's research on the ancient ethics and the care of the self reveals itself as a reflection on the conditions essential to all political resistance. Let's cite another passage which reinforces this point:

> ... if we understand by governmentality a strategic field of power relations in their mobility, transformability, and reversibility, then I do not think that reflection on this notion of governmentality can avoid passing through, theoretically and practically, the element of a subject defined by the relationship of self to self. ....the analysis of governmentality – that is to say, of power as a set of reversible relationships – must refer to an ethics of the subject defined by the relationship of self to self.[29]

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[28] *HOS*, pp. 251-252.
[29] *Ibid*, p. 252

It is essential that we insist on this close relation between relation to self, on the one hand, and politics in the broad sense of governmentality on the other. The reason for this emphasis is that the project of an ethics of self –or of an ethics of care of the self– has provoked much mistrust, or even hostility, from various contemporary thinkers for whom care of the self implies a disinterest in the political sphere. Let's briefly evoke this mistrust which surrounds the ideal of care of the self.

The following comments attest to the fact that Foucault was perfectly aware of this mistrust: "in our society ... at a time that is very difficult to pinpoint, the care of the self became somewhat suspect," he explains in a 1984 interview. "[B]eing concerned with oneself was readily denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self-sacrifice required."[30] This attitude of mistrust towards what could be called "the contemporary culture of care of the self" assumed a vehement form in the works of various thinkers, whether American, or European such as Alain Renaut. The latter, in his *Era of the Individual*, ridiculed what he labels the "absurd contemporary program of care of the self."[70] In his view, this "program" is fundamentally related to the idealization of the value of independence in the form of the desire for an unrestricted freedom. He believes it reveals incomprehension and a radical disinterest towards the intersubjective sphere, the sphere in which the norms structuring life in common are elaborated. Before Renaut, Richard Sennett and Christopher Lasch had also given a very severe diagnosis regarding contemporary narcissism, that psycho-social affection which manifests itself as a withdrawal into the private sphere, the "tyranny of intimacy," and a "triumph of the therapeutic." [31]

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[30] "The ethics of the concern for the self," in *EF*, p. 28. "[S]'occuper de soi a été, à partir d'un certain moment, volontiers dénoncé comme étant une forme d'amour de soi, une forme d'égoïsme ou d'intérêt individuel en contradiction avec l'intérêt qu'il faut porter aux autres" (*DE* II, p. 1531).
[70] In French, "l'absurde programme contemporain du souci de soi" (*L'Ère de l'individu*, p. 61). For other frontal attacks against the contemporary culture of care of the self by Renaut, see *L'individu. Réflexions sur la philosophie du sujet*, p. 26 and p. 53.
[31] For the (eloquent) titles of their writings and references, see bibliography.

Do these critiques, which time doesn't allow me to expand on here, apply to the reconstitution of an ethics of self of the sort Foucault was hoping for? Should the care of the self as understood by Foucault be seen as an extreme form of narcissism, of egoism, and of disinterest for the political? Certainly not. In truth, there is a certain uneasiness which accompanies the statement of any precise claim about what Foucault intended by an "ethics of self" in view of the fact that he passed away before having been able to elaborate such an ethics. But, it seems to me that we can nevertheless still arrive at a fairly good idea of what he had in mind based on the various interviews which he granted in the last years of his life, on the theme of friendship and homosexuality as a way of life.[32] Indeed, it seems to me that it is in these texts that we find the most concrete indications as to the way in which Foucault construed an ethics of self inspired by the Ancients. These texts also succeed in showing how this ethics of self is intrinsically political.

At first glance, we may ask ourselves in what way an ethics of self distinguishes itself from the prevalent individualism. Are we here recalling a form of libertarianism? Is this expression being used to refer to a collective form of life dominated by the ideal of the defence of rights and liberties? In fact, it is interesting to note that the interviews Foucault gave on the issue of homosexuality reveal that, in his view, the defence of gay rights does not represent the core issue raised by the gay experience in present times. Even though he recognized the legitimacy of these demands, in his view, the true challenge consists rather in using the gay experience as a starting point for the elaboration of *new modes of life*, of *new styles of existence*. Rather than being about the assertion of a homosexual identity (here again we detect the presence of a mode of self-relation founded on the ideal of self-knowledge and of a quest for identity), this challenge is about contributing to the creation of new life possibilities through the

[32] This opinion is also shared by, among others, F. Gros (see his "Situation du cours," *L'Herméneutique du sujet*, pp. 523-525) and by T. Bénatouïl who equally refers to Halperin and Davidson (see "Deux usages du stoïcisme: Deleuze, Foucault," pp. 37-38).

exploration of new modes of relation. Let us mention in passing that Foucault thus clearly contributed to the emergence of the *queer* movement and of the extremely paradoxical concept of *queerness* which is defined not by its substantial content but by its position of resistance against all fixation of identity.[33] By directing us back to ancient reflections on the ancient concept of *philia*, Foucault thus evokes the possibility and opportunity for gays to explore and value a way of life where friendship occupies a place of prime importance. What we must beware of, he explains, is

> ...the tendency to relate the question of homosexuality to the problem of "Who am I?" and "What is the secret of my desire?" Perhaps it would be better to ask oneself, "What relations, through homosexuality, can be established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?" The problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but, rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships. ... Therefore, we have to work at becoming homosexuals and not be obstinate in recognizing that we are. The development toward which the problem of homosexuality tends is the one of friendship.[34]

In other words, Foucault suggests that we see homosexuality not as identity, but as a practice and as an art of living, not as a mode of knowledge and recognition of self, but rather as a different way to experience the self founded on the creation of new relational modes. Foucault explains: "Rather than arguing that rights are fundamental and natural to the individual, we should try to imagine and create a new relational right that permits all possible types of relations to exist and not be prevented, blocked, or annulled by impoverished relational institutions."[35] Furthermore, let's be clear that friendship as Foucault intends it here does not imply a withdrawal into the sphere of private interests and that it is not the case that he is encouraging us to cultivate personal relationships which would further isolate us from the communal sphere and would make us indifferent to political

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[33] See D. Halperin, *Saint-Foucault. Towards a gay hagiography*, p. 112 *sqq.*
[34] "Friendship as a way of life," *EST*, pp. 135-136.
[35] "The social triumph of the sexual will," *EST*, p. 158.

life. This point is important in so far as, following Tocqueville, we could interpret this valorization of friendship as an additional manifestation of contemporary individualism. "Individualism", wrote Tocqueville, "is a considered and placid sentiment which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his co-citizens and to withdraw, placing himself, along with his family and friends, at a distance; in such a way that, after having thus created a small society for his personal use, he gladly abandons the larger society."[36] In fact, for his part, Foucault construes friendship rather as a mode of resistance to individualism (or more precisely to the social process of individualization). Indeed, he explains, it does not consist in being exclusively preoccupied with one's self and one's own private interests, it is rather about "constructing (new) cultural forms" allowing for a concrete form of resistance towards the dominant norms which, through the institutions, produce and normalize individuals.[37] In other words, friendship here becomes a form of civil and political resistance.[38] We should mention in passing that Foucault's perspective seems very close to the notion of the relational and social self as elaborated by the feminist current of the *ethics of care* as a corrective to the ideal of rampant individualism and autonomism.[39] In light of these reflections on friendship as a way of life, we can think that the constitution of an ethics of self, a task he considered urgent, is radically distinct from the attitude of narcissistic isolation, of withdrawal into one's self, and of disinterest towards the public sphere, denounced by Lasch, Sennett, and Renaut. For him, the care of the self as the project of an "aesthetic of existence" –a theme which also elicited scepticism from certain thinkers[40] – fundamentally refers to an exercise of

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[36] In French, "L'individualisme est un sentiment réfléchi et paisible qui dispose chaque citoyen à s'isoler de la masse de ses semblables et à se retirer à l'écart avec sa famille et ses ami; de telle sorte que, après s'être ainsi créé une petite société à son usage, il abandonne volontiers la grande société à elle-même" (*De la démocratie en Amérique*, p. 143).

[37] "The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will," *EST*, p. 157.

[38] Perhaps we should construe it as a mode of association, a form of civil implication and action whose importance in democratic life was highlighted by Tocqueville (*De la démocratie en Amérique*, pp. 154-160).

[39] See for example G. Clement, *Care, autonomy, and justice*, p. 5, 35 *sq.*

[40] See Pierre Hadot's passably polemical text, "Réflexions sur la notion de 'culture de soi'."

creativity in our ways of life and of *being together* rather than to an anarchistic form of withdrawal into one's self. And it seems to me that, as highlighted by Foucault himself, here again the Ancients' reflections (such as those on the theme of the *philia*), can serve to fuel the elaboration of an ethics of care of the self which is in keeping with the contemporary situation.[41] But, this would be a topic for another article.

[41] See "Le triomphe social du plaisir sexuel," in *DE* II, p. 1128.

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Chapter 8

Self-Transformation and Foucault

(Brian Lightbody, Brock University)

It is a simple task to find the rather seemingly innocuous term "self-transformation" when performing a search in the Foucauldian secondary literature database. Indeed the word is almost as ubiquitous as such well known Foucauldian popular search words such as "bio-power", "care of the self", "genealogy" and "archaeology". However, finding articles that explain precisely what Foucault means, conceptually speaking, by self-transformation (in the French *se deprendre de soi meme,)* along with the more intriguing question as to how one should go about transforming one's self are much more difficult to find. In the following paper, I focus mainly on the conceptual problems with regard to the very idea of self-transformation. Though this term has been well used by Foucauldians, I argue that the very concept of self-transformation is not only fraught with problems, but is incoherent. My paper is divided into four sections. First, I flesh out Foucault's new philosophical ethos. This ethos is best described as a commitment on behalf of the subject to transform herself, in her entirety, through daily exercises. Second, I examine a penetrating, yet largely ignored issue first raised by Christopher Norris, that I shall call the 'self-transformation problem.' In brief, Norris argues that Foucault's project of total self-transformation is incoherent because he unsuccessfully attempts to wed Kant's moral philosophy to Nietzsche's aesthetic philosophy of the subject. I show that Norris' assessment is correct and go on to argue that the common objections to Foucault's new philosophical ethos for the contemporary subject, such as the

regressivist and dandyist critiques, are simply symptoms of this underlying conceptual confusion. Third, I argue that Norris's diagnosis of the self-transformation is, by and large correct, and furthermore that a recent book by Cressida J. Heyes aptly entitled *Self-Transformations Foucault, Ethics and Normalized Bodies* can be viewed as a project which portends to be promising but ultimately fails as a result of an inability to understand this deep tension in Foucault's work that Norris points out. Finally, in the fourth and final section, I argue that the proof of Foucauldian self-transformation is in the practice. That is, critique is at its most critical, is truly critique when it is being practiced and not when it is being explicated. Thus, and to employ Wittgenstein's ladder analogy from the *Tractatus*, Foucault's understanding of self-transformation is best understood by taking his commentaries and thoughts on what critique entails as merely the ladder or tool that allows us to practice critique. That is, we are most faithful to Foucault, ironically, when we engage in the practice of critique, and especially the critique of Foucault's genealogical practices because it is within these very practices where the self is transformed. Norris, however, confuses Foucault's commentary on what it means to be critical with the practice of critique itself leading to many of the intractable conceptual and practical problems explored in this paper. In short, the ladder--the explication and goal of critique-- is confused with the new, ascended perspective which the ladder allows.

Section One: Self-Transformation as Philosophical Ethos.

Perhaps the clearest understanding regarding Foucault's idea of self-transformation can be gleaned from the 1983 text 'What is Enlightenment?' 'What is Enlightenment' is a commentary on Kant's text of the same name and like Kant, Foucault urges his readers to adopt a new "attitude towards modernity" or "philosophical ethos"[1] As Foucault explains, such an ethos would involve a specific, "mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by

[1] Michel Foucault, What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, Ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Catherine Porter, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 31-50, 39.

certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way too of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task."[2] Moreover this task, Foucault claims, would mark an exit of sorts towards maturity. Much like Kant 200 years earlier in his own essay of the same title *Was ist Aufklarung,* Foucault too it seems, is challenging and imploring human beings to "grow up."

However, the similarities between the two philosophers seem to stop at this point. Despite having identical titles for their papers, there is a good deal of difference between Kant and Foucault's respective philosophical attitudes towards the Enlightenment and subsequent ethical views founded thereon. While Kant challenged his readers to rely on their own reason rather than blindly following authority and tradition, Foucault challenges the twenty-first century subject to adopt an aesthetic-ascetic mode of existence in which we re-create, transform and experiment with the relationship to ourselves (rapport a soi) as though the subject was nothing more than a work of art. Thus, while Kant stressed that the "enlightened" individual would be aware of the limits to human knowledge and understanding and stay within these limits, Foucault's concern "will be to experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[3]

Foucault's ethos then, is a call to establish a new rapport a soi for the subject. It is a call for self-transformation via reflective and voluntary practices that are undertaken by a subject. As Foucault understands this new ethical project for contemporary subjects it entails "giving new impetus as far and wide as possible to the undefined work of freedom" and the best means to achieve this project, Foucault thinks, is first to recognize the various discourses and practices that have produced our current way of "thinking, speaking and doing" that is what

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[2] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 39. Also see "The Ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom" in *The Final Foucault* ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1991), 1-21 as well as "An Aesthetics of Existence in *Michel Foucault Politics, Philosophy, Culture Interviews and Other Writings,* 1977-1984 ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, (New York: Routledge, 1988) 47-57, for more on Foucault's "aesthetics of existence."

[3] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in The Foucault Reader, 50.

Foucault calls our limit-attitude. Once we understand the discourses and practices that serve to constrain our freedom, the purpose of this critical 'ethos' will then be to "separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think."[4] To engage, both *freely* and *consciously*, in an 'ethos' of aesthetic-ascetic experimentation then, would allow us to move beyond our current "limit-attitude."

Foucault's understanding of the self then is quite novel as it is not something immediately given. It is not something that is simply 'there' waiting to be discovered. There is no true self that can be excavated and subsequently cleaned from the corruptive processes of history. Rather the self is formed only through the practice of freely transforming oneself to become something else. Underscoring the need for ethical practice or the practique de soi, is an important point of ethics, which, according to Foucault, has largely been ignored. Ethical practice requires both *nomoi* (rules of conduct) and *askesis* (moral exercises which allow us to place rules of conduct into practice) in order to be truly ethical. Modern philosophers have placed too much emphasis on the *nomoi* without placing equal emphasis on the practices that allow the *nomoi* to materialize. Thus, Foucault's ethos of self-transformation emphasizes that it is always a subject that *acts*, and therefore it is always a specific subject who must possess the moral strength of character in order to act ethically in a specific situation. Moreover, a perquisite to ensure that one has the moral strength of character to act ethically is to posses and further develops one's attitude towards the ethical. That is, one must practice *for* an "ethics" daily and be open to change this 'practice' as required according to new circumstances. Thus, the philosophical "ethos," Foucault advocates in his later work, can only be "experimental," as we are always confronting new, untold, ethical and social issues and problems.

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[4] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 46.

Section Two: The problem of "self-transformation."

Christopher Norris is the first and perhaps only thinker to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of total and complete 'self-transformation.' In his article "What is Enlightenment: Kant according to Foucault" Norris writes: "What exactly can it mean for this *unitary* being to enter upon a process of *voluntary* "self-transformation" whereby its constitutive "practices" or "rules of conduct" are viewed (so to speak) as the raw material for its own esthetic elaboration?" (Italics added)[5] In other words, if Foucault's 'ethos' is a call for self-transformation via reflective and voluntary practices that are undertaken by a subject in order "to give new impetus as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom" then Norris ponders: 'How can a unitary, singular, autonomous subject consciously choose to become something different from itself---a *se deprendre de soi meme*---on a daily basis?' This obvious conceptual confusion on the axiological level of Foucault's philosophy of the subject stems, Norris thinks, from a conceptual confusion on Foucault's part with regard to the ontological constitution of subjectivity. Foucault holds two very different, and indeed, contradictory notions in regards to the ontological status of the subject: "one premised on a notional appeal to the self as a unified, autonomous, locus of agency and will..."writes Norris and "...the other enmeshed in a subject-centered language of "reflection", non-self-identity, and, as Foucault would have it specular misrecognition."[6] On the one hand, Foucault views the subject as an Kantian autonomous noumenal power centre of concentrated will that is totally and completely free from external control. On the other hand, Foucault also seems to suggest that subjectivity is something which is always alien to itself. The 'subject' is simply a collection of variegated drives and other capacities. This is Foucault's Nietzschean view of subjectivity.

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[5] Christopher Norris, "What is Enlightenment? Kant according to Foucault," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* edited by Gary Gutting, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 183.
[6] Norris, "What is Enlightenment? Kant according to Foucault," 183.

The existence of 'two selves' in Foucault's work has gone largely unnoticed in the secondary literature. Part of the reason for this lapse should be placed squarely on Foucault's shoulders for it is abundantly evident that even he was unclear as to the ontological status subjectivity possessed in his philosophy. For example, Foucault testifies to Paul Rabinow and Richard Dreyfus in 1983 in the interview "On the Genealogy of Ethics an Overview of a Work in Progress" that his view of the self is closer to that of Nietzsche's. But this is very far from being the case. In point of fact, Foucault's understanding of the self (at least in some very important ways) is not very close to Nietzsche's view of the self at all.[7] Rather, Foucault's philosophical position on the 'self'---how it is formed as well as the relationship between ethical thought, action and the self---is radically new. In sum, it is an unsuccessful and incoherent attempt to synthesize an ethics of self-invention a la Nietzsche with a formal Kantian ethics that presupposes the autonomy and freewill of the subject.

Norris maintains that this attempted Kantian-Nietzschean synthesis regarding the self is unsuccessful and largely incoherent because it not only combines two contradictory notions as to what exactly the 'self' is, but also seems to entail two different and competing ethical approaches. We can see Norris' point by briefly examining and comparing both positions. For the Kantian, to acknowledge that a subject is still free to choose between different actions in an ethical context despite the subject's historical constraints, biological predispositions and, of course, desires, is simply to acknowledge the freedom and autonomy of a subject in any ethical decision making process. But, Norris suggests, if the subject is already free, why should one re-shape it or re-create it? Indeed, what exactly are we disassembling? Is it our vices? It is our lack of resolve? Is it our cowardice? Or, is it perhaps our laziness? If this is what Foucault's 'ethos' entails then it is *identical* with Kant's motto of *Sapere Aude*!

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[7] To see Foucault's responses to a series of Rabinow and Dreyfus' questions see "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" in *The Foucault Reader*, 340-372, 351.

Indeed, in the very first paragraph of *Was ist Aufklarung?* Kant argues that it is precisely because we are lazy and cowardly that we remain in lifelong immaturity.[8]

Let us turn now to the Nietzschean strand of Foucault's conception of the self. Nietzsche had a tremendous influence on Foucault's philosophical thinking. We can see many distinctly Nietzschean themes in almost all of Foucault's works from the power/knowledge period, to his work on the subject in the early eighties. In "Two Lectures" for example, Foucault claims that "individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application."[9] This statement is not very different from many claims made by Nietzsche in the *Nachlass.* Furthermore, in the interview "Confessions of the Flesh" when asked by Allain Miller: "So who ultimately, in your view are the subjects who oppose each other." Foucault responds in typical Nietzschean fashion: "This is just an hypothesis but I would say its all against all...Who fights against whom? We all fight against each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else."[10] Again this statement is very similar to Nietzsche's view of the 'self' as found in section 19 of *Beyond Good and Evil.* While finally in one of Foucault's last interviews he responds to Paul Rabinow's question as to whether his philosophical position on the subject is closer to Sartre's than Nietzsche's by saying explicitly: "Yes. My view is much closer to Nietzsche's than to Sartre's (with respect to sec. 290 of *The Gay Science*)."[11]

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[8] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?(1784) in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* trans. Ted Humphrey, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1983) 41-48, 41.
[9] Foucault, Michel. "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings,* Ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

[10] Foucault, Michel "The Confession of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge*, 208.
[11] Foucault, Michel, "On The Genealogy of Ethics and Overview of a Work in Progress," 351 in *The Foucault Reader.*
[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), sec. 290, 232.
[13] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, sec. 290,232.

However, if we now turn to Nietzsche, we see a somewhat different ontological conception of the self and consequently a different ethical approach than the one advocated by Foucault. Turning first to section 290 of *The Gay Science*, (a passage that has been very much used and abused by Nietzschean scholars), Nietzsche writes that: "One thing is needful—To "give style" to one's character..."[12] What's more, we need to give style to our character, Nietzsche suggests, because there are particular *natural aspects* about ourselves that are not aesthetically pleasing. Yet, it is important to note that this passage does not give one aesthetic license to transform one's self *en toto*. Nor would Nietzsche argue that we have the capacity to be something other than our nature. Rather, Nietzsche emphasizes molding oneself according "to the constraint of a single taste."[13] While taste, as Nietzsche makes clear in numerous passages throughout his oeuvre, is a metaphor for the strongest physiological drive within the human body. "We gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity," Nietzsche writes "namely as regents at the head of a communality and also of the dependence of these regents upon the ruled."[14] Finally, in *Beyond Good and Evil* sec. 19 Nietzsche elaborates on the nature of this rule by stating that: "In all willing, it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of many souls."[15] This point follows naturally from the one before because "every drive...according to Nietzsche, wants to be master---and it attempts to philosophize in that spirit."[16] It is the

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[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Holingdale, (New York: Vintage Books,) sec. 492, 271.
[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 2000), sec, 19 216-217.

[16] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 6, 204.
[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann , "Why am I so Clever?" sec. 10, 710.
[18] Nietzsche *The Gay Science*, sec. 290, 232.

strong or "choice individual" who, according to Nietzsche, is able to yoke the lesser drives for the sake of the strongest drive and are therefore the only human beings capable of becoming what they already are.[17] Strong individuals Nietzsche writes, "enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own"[18] while, "it is the weak characters... Nietzsche reminds us...without power over themselves that hate the constraint of style."[19] To be sure this does not mean that the strong are 'free' to create whatever image of themselves they wish, rather, it is because they are destined to be that which they already are which allows them to harness these lesser drives for their pre-ordained, higher purpose. Hence, Foucault's advocacy to transform and "disassemble" oneself on a continual basis according to one's aesthetic tastes is simply a project that is quite alien to Nietzsche's own 'ethos' regarding the "strong" or "choice" type of human being who rules with one goal, *one* 'self', and one taste in mind. Indeed, the head drive for the "choice" individual is ontologically identical to what we call our 'self.'

As seen from the above investigation, Norris appears to be correct in suggesting that there is a tension of sorts with respect to Foucault's conception of the self in his later works. In 'late' Foucault, there is an obvious appreciation for Enlightenment ideals, but how Foucault is able to square this with his earlier Nietzschean heritage remains a mystery. The result, Norris argues, is an inchoate ethos that not only lacks any substance, but is impossible to implement.

Section Three: Is Foucauldian self-transformation incoherent?

Foucauldian self-transformation leads to incoherency because there seems to be a conceptual confusion regarding how the principal terms namely 'self' and

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[19] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* sec. 290 232-233. Walter Kaufmann's commentary on this passage is also instructive. "Note also the suggestion that resentiment is rooted in an inability to accept oneself." (233)

'transformation' are being used. It is unclear what precisely the self is and it is equally unclear where the sources and drive as it were for transformation reside in the self. As Foucault himself shows, our notion of the self is neither something which is simple nor natural but is rather a historical construct through and through. For example, what Foucault calls the ethical substance (substance ethique) or (the material that is to be worked over by an ethical practice) changes from epoch to epoch. The ethical substance to be worked upon by the ancient Greeks (or aphrodisia) is much different than the ethical substance to be worked upon by the Christians (the flesh) while the ethical substance that we have inherited (sexuality) is again much different than these other two.

Turning to the concept of 'transformation' we find a similar problem. Transformation conceptually entails temporality since to notice some thing being transformed is to notice the one and the same thing to be different or altered from what it once was. Thus, when we think of ethical transformation we want to know the reasons as to why we, as subjects, undergo various ethical practices. That is, we want to know the telos that specific subjects must aim towards in order to become ethical. As Foucault once again notes, in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, subjects in different epochs have different ethical goals. The goal for the Stoic, for example, is much different than the ethical goal of the Christian. For the former, the goal may be to become autonomous or master of one's body, while the goal for the latter may be to achieve immortality by purifying the soul. Ethical transformation, conceptually speaking would seem to imply that the subject is aware of why he or she is undergoing the practices they are in fact undergoing and for what purpose.

According to Foucault, we may understand every ethical practice, including his own philosophical ethos, as comprised of four ethical aspects, what Foucault calls the ethical substance, the mode of subjection, the pratique du soi, and finally the teleogie. However, many Foucauldians interpret Foucault's own ethics of self-transformation to be somehow beyond such historical concerns and

do not analyze Foucault's own philosophical ethos according to these four aspects.

But Foucauldian ethics is historically transcendent: it is only meant to expose and then trespass against present limit-attitudes in order to discover new lines of possible flight and to find new ways to transgress norms. However, all of these construals as to what self-transformation entails and how it is to be practiced are strictly speaking anti-Foucauldian precisely because they are non-historical. They take the call for transformation in and of itself as positive and something to be practiced in and of itself when self-transformation is a byproduct of genealogical critique. They mistake Foucault's own interpretations and historical investigations as Wittgenstein says, for proper pictures of the world when really, they are merely steps on the ladder that allow us to see the world rightly. We commit an injustice to Foucault when, 30 years after the publication of *Survir et Punir,* we enthusiastically ask the same tired, antiquated questions like: 'Why resist?' 'Why not simply submit' to power?' Or: 'How is resistance possible?' Or one that is still quite common today: 'How may we supplement Foucault's philosophy of the subject?' Such questions are both superficial and wrongheaded. They presuppose that Foucault's own therapeutic cure for the social ills of contemporary society are somehow transcendent and beyond our historical present. Critique does not simply consist in applying Foucauldian methods to various contemporary problems nor working out, in more detail, answers and possible solutions to questions Foucault already raised. Critique, rather, entails asking critical questions of Foucault's very philosophical ethos. It is to ask such questions as: 'What is it about our particular dispostif which makes us want to discover possible lines of flight?' 'Why is that we want to trespass against our very limit-attitude?' 'If we adopt this seemingly new philosophical ethos of self-transformation what then is our new ethical substance?' 'What is our new mode of subjectivation?' 'What is or should be our new practique du soi and what is our new teleogie?' Finally and most importantly we need to ask: 'What do all four of

these, so called, new aspects of a self-transformative ethics that we assume to apply to all ethical practices and theories, tell us about our own peculiar historical development as subjects?' In short, the practice of self-transformation is not some "thing" that should be aimed at as one shoots arrows at a target. To understand self-transformation in this way is to dehistorize it and is resoundingly anti-genealogical. It is to gaze into the blue of 'self-transformation' as it were and wonder how we may, by force of flight, transcend our current dispositif. Self-transformation is the result of critique and critique is always documentary grey: critique is simply the practice of asking new and hitherto unasked questions.

It is often said that it was Socrates who made us value the answer, but that it was Nietzsche who made us value the question. In *On The Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche demonstrates, in convincing fashion, that it is not the study of morals itself which is important, but rather the question that is of fundamental importance. It was, after all, as Nietzsche writes, only when he turned the question of value in on itself that a new and very different unknown investigation of morality was born. It was only when Nietzsche questioned the value of values that led him, as he writes, "to his own country, his own soil, a totally secluded, flowering, blooming world, a secret garden, as it were, of which no one had the slightest inkling...O how lucky we are, we knowledgeable people, provided only that we know how to stay silent long enough! We men and women of knowledge, we genealogists, are unknown to ourselves because we do not know when to stay silent!"[71] It is when we are silent that we can think and ruminate. It is silence that allows us to ask new questions. It is in the space of silence where we begin to engage in critique.

[71] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, section 3.

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Brian Lightbody

Dr. Brian Lightbody is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Lightbody received his Ph.D. in Philosophy and was awarded the Governor General's Gold Medal from The Dominican University College of Philosophy and Theology in Ottawa, Canada.

Rohit Dalvi

Dr. Rohit Dalvi is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Dalvi received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the U.S.